

Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



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*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT*



**SPECIAL ESSAY:**

## NEW GENERATION MEDIA & MILITIAS: RUSSIA'S SEARCH & RESCUE IN SYRIA

### MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA

- 3 Syria, Egypt, Libya: A New Russia-Dominated Axis?
- 5 Turkish Perspectives on US Action in Syria
- 6 Iraq: The Day After in Mosul
- 7 Iran Claims Enhanced Missile Precision
- 8 Development of Iranian Nanotechnology Companies in China
- 9 Iran and Russia Upgrade Cooperation
- 10 Russia's North African Foothold
- 11 Iran and the Syrian Conflict's Shifting Loyalties

### AFRICA

- 13 South Africa: Protests Against President as Credit Rating Sinks to Junk Status
- 14 South Africa's Military Declines as Budgets Fall Short
- 15 South Sudan: As Famine Worsens, Criticism Over Military Spending
- 16 Somali President's Declaration of War on Al-Shabaab Met with More Terrorist Attacks
- 17 Somalia's Troops Have a High Expectation for Their New President: Being Paid
- 18 Repression and Resistance in Cameroon's Anglophone Community
- 19 Doubt over Peace Talks in Mali

### LATIN AMERICA

- 20 Not Guillermo Lasso
- 21 Bolivarians Talking Tough
- 22 Human Trafficking Activity in Colombia
- 23 Colombia Acquires New Scientific Research Ship
- 24 Costa Rica and Narcotics Trade
- 24 China and Cuba Strengthen Military Ties
- 25 Brazilian Army Expands Armored Vehicle Fleet

### ASIA-PACIFIC

- 26 A "First" for the People's Liberation Army: A Navy Admiral Becomes a Joint, Regional, Commander
- 27 The Evolution of the PLA's Red-Blue Exercises
- 28 A Russian View on US-North Korean Relations
- 29 China's Plan to Develop its Strategic Emerging Industries: Tap into Private Investors
- 29 Potential for Lone-Wolf Attacks on the Rise in Southeast Asia
- 30 Strategic Issues China Faces in Military Informatization
- 31 An Insightful Indian Analysis on China's Warfare Strategies
- 32 The Philippines Eyes an End to the NPA Insurgency

### CENTRAL ASIA, CAUCASUS

- 33 The Aftermath of the St. Petersburg Metro Bombing
- 34 The Russian-South Ossetian Military Merger

### RUSSIA, UKRAINE, EUROPE

- 35 A Russian Perspective of 21st Century War
- 36 New Special Forces Training Center in Chechnya
- 37 Training Russian Military Journalists
- 38 Military Parades and Economic Discontent
- 39 Buying "Proof" of Military Service
- 40 Arming the Icebreakers
- 41 Winter Training in the Arctic
- 42 ETA Shows in France
- 43 Stockholm Terror Attack Shows New and Old Trends

### SPECIAL ESSAY

- 44 New Generation Media and Militias: A Case Study in Russia's November 2015 Search and Rescue Operation

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**ON THE COVER:** Downed Syrian Army helicopter, Idlib Province, 3/22/15.

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# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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## Syria, Egypt, Libya: A New Russia-Dominated Axis?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia continues to expand its influence in the Middle East and North Africa. The accompanying excerpts from Middle Eastern sources discuss Russia's deepening role in Libya, including its strategy of using Egypt as a platform to establish a foothold inside Libya. This comes amid Russia's current presence in Syria, suggesting a potential Russia-dominated axis in the Mediterranean, including Syria, Egypt and Libya. This is significant because it influences Russian access to the Suez Canal and signals Russia's intent to protect its future operations in the region.

The first passage from a Turkish source claims that Russia is preparing for a military intervention in Libya. It reports that Russia has deployed special operations forces and UAVs in the Egyptian town of Sidi Barrani, east of Libya, with this goal. The piece claims that "Russia is using special army forces to provide training for General Halife Haftar's units in Libya, which Egypt supports." The piece also notes Russia's cooperation with Egypt, reminding that the two countries' militaries conducted joint exercises in the Mediterranean recently. It also points out that Russia's natural gas company purchased 30% of one of Egypt's richest natural gas fields for \$1.5 billion last year.

The second passage from *Al Jazeera* features comments by Moscow-based military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, who discusses that Russia is keen on establishing a foothold in Libya and having influence there. It notes that Felgenhauer did not deny claims that the Kremlin is negotiating the opening of a military base on Egypt's border with Libya. Felgenhauer says that "Russia may provide weaponry, military training, logistical support [to General Haftar]," but notes that it would seek some sort of compensation in return, such as oil income. According to the article, Russian support for General Haftar has been dictated by concerns about the spread of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on Europe's doorstep and Russia's intent to set up a broad anti-terrorism coalition. In this coalition, Moscow would play a mediating role in Libya that would afford it a privileged relationship with the country's leadership in the future.

Felgenhauer also discusses Russia's use of contractors in the region, saying that Russia is "relying on private military contractors and mercenaries [to help Haftar]... Private contractors are very convenient because they have no political strings attached." He notes that Russia is already doing this in Syria, where contractors do the real fighting instead of Russian servicemen. Russia's use of private contractors without official uniforms also makes it difficult to identify and verify the exact nature of Russian military activity in the region.

There are several other factors which may provide a context for Russia's moves in Libya. First, Moscow has a general interest in stabilizing the region. Second, Russia has an interest in assisting Egypt and bolstering the regime in Egypt (where President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's ideological affinity, which opposes the Muslim Brotherhood, makes it attractive to Moscow). Third, from Russia's perspective, a friendly or loyal regime in Libya could help create a Russia-dominated axis of Syria, Egypt and Libya. Finally, Russian businesses have an interest in gaining a foothold in new markets. (Also see: "Perspectives on Russian Motives in Libya," *OE Watch*, April 2017.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*"It is being reported that Russian special forces and UAVs have been deployed in the Egyptian town of Sidi Barrani, east of Libya, with the goal of an intervention [in Libya]. It is also being claimed that Russia is using special army forces to provide training for General Halife Haftar's units in Libya, which Egypt supports."*

**Source:** "Rusya o ülkeye asker yığıyor! (Russia piling soldiers into that country!)," *Milliyet.com.tr*, 19 March 2017. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/son-dakika-rusya-dan-dengeleri-deg-dunya-2416401/>

*Developments are showing that Russia has started to surround Europe from the west and the south through a strategy aimed to control the energy routes. As part of Moscow's strategy to encircle Europe, it is now being claimed that Moscow is preparing for a military intervention in Libya. According to the news from the region, Russia has started to deploy weapons to Egypt, as a platform to intervene in Libya.*

*It is being reported that Russian special forces and UAVs have been deployed in the Egyptian town of Sidi Barrani, east of Libya, with the goal of an intervention. It is also being claimed that Russia is using special army forces to provide training for General Halife Haftar's units in Libya, which Egypt supports. If Russian President Vladimir Putin gives the green light for a military intervention in Libya, after Syria, with the claim of fighting ISIS, the balance in the Eastern Mediterranean will be upended in a way that changes many of the regional actors' calculations.*

### **Deep Cooperation with Egypt**

*Russia was one of the countries that turned the 2013 military coup into an advantage for itself. In addition to conducting agreements with Cairo, Russian and Egyptian armies also strengthened their cooperation by conducting joint exercises in the Mediterranean recently. Last year Russia's natural gas company purchased 30% of one of Egypt's richest natural gas fields for \$1.5 billion.*

*"Russia may provide weaponry, military training, logistical support, but we would seek some sort of compensation. Haftar has an oil income and Russia may be ready to trade."*

(continued)



## Continued: Syria, Egypt, Libya: A New Russia-Dominated Axis?

**Source:** “Can Russia resolve the conflict in Libya?” *Al Jazeera*, 16 March 2017.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/03/russia-resolve-conflict-libya-170316094138550.html>

*“Felgenhauer [a Moscow-based military analyst] confirmed reports that Russia is using military contractors in Libya, saying that it is part of a consolidated trend in recent conflicts. He added that outsourcing the military fight helps avoid a political backlash at home.*

*“Russia is not sending its troops to help Haftar and is unlikely to do so in the near future. We are rather relying on private military contractors and mercenaries. We are already using contractors in Syria, where they are suffering serious losses, because they are doing the real fighting instead of Russian servicemen. Private contractors are very convenient because they have no political strings attached.”*

*Felgenhauer said the employment of private contractors has been facilitated by a new legal framework aimed at regulating Russian private military companies. In addition to limited financial resources, Russia cannot afford outstretching its military or financial capabilities at a moment when Moscow is involved in other strategic conflicts on its doorstep.*

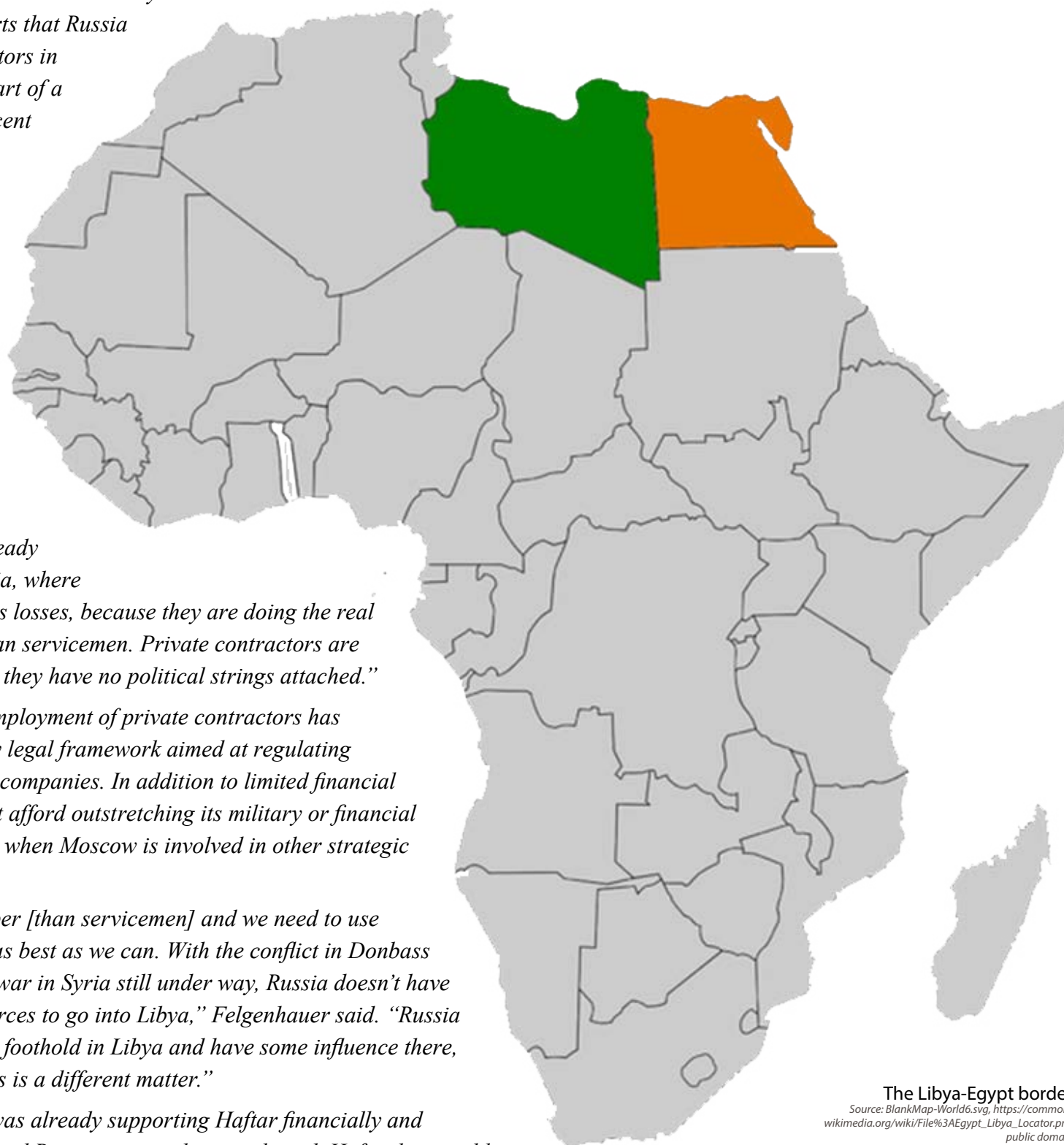
*“Contractors are cheaper [than servicemen] and we need to use our financial resources as best as we can. With the conflict in Donbass simmering, Crimea, the war in Syria still under way, Russia doesn’t have the appetite or the resources to go into Libya,” Felgenhauer said. “Russia is keen on establishing a foothold in Libya and have some influence there, but committing resources is a different matter.”*

*Asked whether Russia was already supporting Haftar financially and militarily, Felgenhauer said Russia was ready to trade with Haftar but would not offer its help for free.*

*“Russia may provide weaponry, military training, logistical support, but we would seek some sort of compensation. Haftar has an oil income and Russia may be ready to trade.”*

*The same discourse applies to Egypt, the Kremlin’s main ally in the region. Asked to comment on Russian media reports that the Kremlin was negotiating the opening of a military base on the border with Libya, Felgenhauer didn’t deny the reports. He said Egypt asked for enormous economic aid in exchange for allowing a Russian military base on its soil.*

*Russian analysts agree that Russia’s support for General Haftar has been dictated by its concerns about the spread of ISIL on Europe’s doorstep and its intent to set up a broad anti-terrorism coalition. In addition, Moscow is seeking to play a mediating role in Libya that would allow it to establish a privileged relationship with the country’s leadership in its future dealings.*



The Libya-Egypt border.  
 Source: BlankMap-World6.svg, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AEgypt\\_Libya\\_Locator.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AEgypt_Libya_Locator.png), public domain.





## Turkish Perspectives on US Action in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from Turkish sources discuss Turkish reactions to US missile strikes that hit the Syrian regime airbase al-Shayrat on 7 April. Initial reactions indicate that Turkish government officials welcomed the move, and hope that this is the first step of a strategy which will entail further action. Government officials are also renewing their calls for a safe-zone and no-fly zone, which would alleviate some of Ankara's refugee burden. Others are calling for a more cautious view, particularly given Turkey's recent effort with Russia and Iran in the Astana process (peace talks hosted by Russia in the Kazakh capital, Astana), warning against hasty support for the US, which would risk relations with Russia.

The first passage quotes President Erdoğan as saying that Assad has incurred his first response from the US but that this is not enough. He says that this must continue and that Assad, "who uses sarin and chlorine gas" must pay the price. The second passage discusses comments by the Prime Minister, where he says that the US strikes articulated the feelings of the world. He calls for a safe zone in northern Syria, given the possibility of a new wave of refugees heading toward Turkey. He also says that Turkey is prepared to provide any kind of support to the US.

Turkey had initially adopted an adamant policy of "Assad must go," but later appeared to soften its position. Recently, Turkey has been working with Iran and Russia on the Astana process which suggested that the country had pushed its policy of working for the demise of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to the back burner. Its reactions to the US strikes now suggests that Turkey is still pursuing the removal of Assad, which puts it at odds with Russia.

Against this background, military analysts are calling for a more measured and cautious approach. As the third accompanying passage discusses, "it is too early to say that the United States has shelved its priority of eliminating the Islamic State (IS) and shifted its attention to removing Assad from power..." Respected military analyst Metin Gürcan cautions that Turkey must avoid U-turns and avoid finding itself in a situation where it is "sandwiched between" the US and Russia. He writes, "There is still the question of whether Turkey will align with Trump or with Putin in the post-IS period and during Syria's reconstruction. Ankara's policies should be more level-headed, cool and based on field developments."

Given Turkey's reaction, it is possible that there will be a fallout in Turkish-Russian ties. Gürcan asks: "Has Turkey made a mistake by so precipitately lining up with Washington and reverting to its 'Assad must go' doctrine? Will Turkey's animosity toward Assad trigger new tensions with Russia?" These are important questions Turkey will have to contend with on Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*"The murderer Assad, who uses sarin and chlorine gas, has incurred his first response from the United States. But is this enough? It isn't. I think this must continue, because this man, who has killed nearly a million people, must pay the price."*

— President Erdoğan

**Source:** "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Katil Esed'in attığı adım ilk cevabını buldu (President Erdoğan: Murderer Assad's act got its first response)," *Anadolu Haber Ajansı (Anatolian News Agency)*, 7 April 2017. <http://aa.com.tr/tr/gunun-basliklari/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-katil-esedin-attigi-adim-ilk-cevabini-buldu-/791883>

*"The murderer Assad, who uses sarin and chlorine gas, has incurred his first response from the United States. But is this enough? It isn't. I think this must continue, because this man, who has killed nearly a million people, must pay the price."*

**Source:** "Türkiye'den ABD'ye mesaj: Desteğe hazırız! (Message from Turkey to the US: We are ready [to provide] Support!)," *Hurhaber.com*, 8 April 2017. <http://www.hurhaber.com/turkiye-den-abd-ye-mesaj-destege-haziriz-haberi-315139.html>

*Prime Minister Yıldırım [said], "We are prepared to provide all kinds of support on Syria. The US has articulated the feelings of the world."... Yıldırım also highlighted the need for a safe zone in Syria, given the possibility of a [refugee] flow towards Turkey in light of the recent developments.*

**Source:** Metin Gürcan, "How Turkey's 'hasty' support for US missile strike could backfire," *Al Monitor*, 10 April 2017. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/turkey-united-states-ankara-hastily-approves-missile-attack.html#ixzz4eErkRz4J>

*This apparently cosmetic attack, which for the time being appears to be a one-off, doesn't affect the tactical picture on the ground. It's also too early to say that the United States has shelved its priority of eliminating the Islamic State (IS) and shifted its attention to removing Assad from power. That shift could be a possibility if we see a second or even third wave of US attacks on targets west of the Euphrates River, in areas with Russian air superiority or on Damascus.*

*However, Ankara put out an unnecessarily hasty statement saying it would provide all types of support for the US attack. It could find itself sandwiched between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. This is a time when Turkey should avoid U-turns. There is still the question of whether Turkey will align with Trump or with Putin in the post-IS period and during Syria's reconstruction. Ankara's policies should be more level-headed, cool and based on field developments.*

*Has Turkey made a mistake by so precipitately lining up with Washington and reverting to its "Assad must go" doctrine? Will Turkey's animosity toward Assad trigger new tensions with Russia? How will calling off the coordination and communication between the United States and Russia in Syrian air space affect Turkey's operations?*



## Iraq: The Day After in Mosul

**OE Watch Commentary:** The battle for Mosul, the last Iraqi stronghold of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) began in mid-October 2016, when Iraqi and Kurdish forces (peshmerga) backed by coalition air power, launched a long and complex operation to retake the city. Iraqi forces recaptured the eastern part of the city at the end of January. Currently, the battle for control continues in the western part of the city. Iraqi officials are already planning ahead and, as the accompanying passages discuss, have decided to entrust the security of Mosul to a Sunni militia called the “Nineveh Guards,” after the city is fully liberated from ISIS.

As the passages discuss, Osama al-Nujaifi, one of the three Vice Presidents of Iraq, announced on 12 April that the Nineveh Guards will eventually be assigned to provide security in Mosul. Formerly known as “Hashd al-Watani” or the “[Iraqi] National Mobilization Forces,” the Nineveh Guards are a Sunni militia with approximately 2,000 to 3,000 members. As the third passage discusses, the Nineveh Guards were trained by the Turkish Armed Forces, and are currently commanded by Atheel al-Nujaifi. Atheel al-Nujaifi was the governor of Nineveh province and its capital, Mosul, when Islamic State fighters captured the city in June 2014. The Sunni force most recently participated in the Mosul operation along with the peshmerga, and as the first passage notes, made significant contributions to fighting ISIS.

The third passage features a segment from a March 2017 interview with Atheel al-Nujaifi. He points out that the Nineveh Guard consists of Nineveh locals and tribes who volunteered to fight ISIS and restore security to cities in the province. He also claims that if the Nineveh Guard is given the job of securing Mosul, they “would rely on citizens as part of their security plan, empowering and protecting them against terrorism,” noting that “terrorism will be weakened.” (Also see: “Who Wants What in Mosul?” *OE Watch*, November 2016.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Nineveh Province, Iraq.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3132508>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ninevehdistricts.jpg>, CC BY SA 3.0.

**Source:** “Musul’un Güvenliği Ninova Muhafızlarına Emanet Edilecek (Mosul’s Security will be Entrusted to the Nineveh Guards),” *Son Dakika*, 13 April 2017. <http://www.sondakika.com/haber/haber-musul-un-guvenligi-ninova-muhafizlari-na-emanet-9489054/>

*[Vice] President of Iraq Osama al-Nujaifi has announced that the Nineveh Guards, a group dominated by Sunni members, will be assigned to provide security in Mosul.*

*Nujaifi, who visited the Nineveh Guards’ camp near Mosul, highlighted that this group made significant contributions to cleansing the city from the terror group DAESH.*

**Source:** “Ninova Muhafızları Musul’da güvenliği sağlayacak (Nineveh Guards to Maintain Security in Mosul),” *Star.com*, 12 April 2017. <http://www.star.com.tr/dunya/ninova-muhafizlari-musulda-guvenligi-saglayacak-haber-1206583/>

### Who are the Nineveh Guards?

*The Nineveh Guards, who were trained by the Turkish Armed Forces, are currently commanded by the former Mosul Governor Nujaifi. The approximately 2000 Sunni force most recently participated in the Mosul operation along with the peshmerga. Initially named as “Hash al-Watani”, the force later changed its name to the “Nineveh Guards.”*

**Source:** “Sunni ex-governor: Mosul was ‘handed over’ to Islamic State,” *The New Arab*, 18 March 2017. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2017/3/18/Sunni-ex-governor-Mosul-was-handed-over-to-Islamic-State>

*[Commander of the Nineveh Guard and former governor of Mosul, Atheel al-Nujaifi]: “The Nineveh Guard consist of Nineveh locals and tribes who volunteered to fight Daesh and restore security to cities in the province. We currently have a full brigade taking part in holding territory in eastern Mosul but not inside the city, and two brigades in their bases. These troops can enter Mosul and handle security there, but we are keen for this not to be part of political conflicts. I believe that if there is no political agreement on the entry of the Nineveh Guard into the city to deploy and keep the order in a different way from the approach of the current forces like the army, police and militias, which continue their practices from the time before the fall of Mosul, then we will face a real problem.*

*We believe that if the Nineveh Guard enter things would be different. They would rely on citizens as part of their security plan, empowering and protecting them against terrorism. In this case, terrorism will be weakened.”*



## Iran Claims Enhanced Missile Precision

**OE Watch Commentary:** During the course of negotiations which culminated in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the corollary United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran achieved a change in language with regard to its ballistic missile program. UN Security Council Resolution 1929 from 2010 declared that the Security Council “decides that Iran shall not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons...” whereas 2231 declared, “Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons...” Iranian leaders say that the more recent wording does not technically ban ballistic missile work and, regardless, they deny they design missiles to carry nuclear weapons, fiercely defending the acceleration of Iran’s ballistic missile program.



An Iranian Shahab medium range ballistic missile.  
Source: Young Journalist Club, [goo.gl/7V3RWP](http://goo.gl/7V3RWP), public domain.

In the wake of the JCPOA, Iran has tested at least ten ballistic missiles. While most news coverage focuses on the increasing range of such missiles, the excerpted article quoting the chief of staff of the armed forces, claims that Iran has also made great strides in accuracy since the time when Iran’s missile program was based on the notoriously inaccurate SCUDs. The Iranian claims about increasing accuracy may not simply be hyperbole: In March 2016, Iran test-fired two different types of Qadr ballistic missiles from the Alborz Mountains near the Caspian which, according to the Iranian Defense Ministry, successfully struck targets on Iran’s Makran Coast, on the Indian Ocean.

Improving Iranian missile accuracy may spur a further arms and missile race among Arab Gulf countries. While Israel might be concerned with such developments as well, Israeli anti-missile defenses can likely counter such threats regardless of their warhead’s accuracy. Regardless, growing Iranian missile accuracy reflects on the growing technical competence of Iran’s indigenous military industries and might also suggest that Western attempts to embargo high-technology and dual use goods may be falling short. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The missiles are capable of hitting within ten meters of their target.”*

**Source:** “Sarlashkar Bagheri: Fenavari Moshakha-ye ba Khata-ye Zir 10 meter dar Ekhtiyar Kamtar Keshvari Ast (General Bagheri: Iran is one of the Few Countries to have Missiles with a 10 Meter Margin of Error),” *Entekhab*, 18 March 2017. [www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/332311/](http://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/332311/) -رایتخارد در تهم ۱۰-ریز-یاطخ-اب-یاهکشوم-یروانف-یرقاب-رکشلرس-تس-ایروشک-رتمک

### Missile Margin Error Less than 10 Meters

*The chief of staff of the armed forces hailed the development of missiles which are able to hit targets within ten meters of accuracy and noted that few countries in the world have achieved this technology, and today Iran has the ability to produce and use these weapons. General Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the armed forces, speaking at an exhibition of defense achievements commemorating the first battle of Faw (Valfajr-8), said: military equipment at the exhibition are all built utilizing Iranian technology... Bagheri said, the missiles are capable of hitting within ten meters of their target... He said the purpose of his visit to this region [Arvandkenar] was to visit the Islamic Republic of Iran border guards.*





## Development of Iranian Nanotechnology Companies in China

**OE Watch Commentary:** While Tehran's investment in nuclear, ballistic missile, and other military technology is usually the topic of diplomatic concern if not headlines in the West, Iran's technological focus goes much deeper. As the excerpted article from late last year discusses, several Iranian companies focused on nanotechnology displayed their products in China and successfully signed contracts or partnerships with Chinese companies or universities during the "Chinano2016 International Exhibition" on 26-28 October 2016.

Nanotechnology—a cutting edge focus in which many developing countries do not engage—has many applications, especially in the medical field. Electrospinning, for example, can be used for wound dressing, medical implants, and to create scaffolding upon which tissue can grow. However, there are also potential military dimensions to nanotechnology, such as nanometallics for armaments, increased strength carbon fibers, and advanced sensors.

This partnership will be a shot of adrenalin for the nascent Iranian nanotechnology industry, albeit one replete with risks should Chinese firms steal Iranian intellectual property rights.  
**End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The Second Sino Iran Nanotechnology Business Matchmaking Event was held with the participation of Iranian and Chinese parties...”*

**Source:** “Tawse’ah Fa’aliyatha-ye Sharkatha-ye Fenavari Nano Irani dar Keshavar Chin (Development of Iranian Nanotechnology Companies’ Activities in China),” *Nano.ir*, 31 October 2016. [goo.gl/DLQk4H](http://goo.gl/DLQk4H)

### **Development of Iranian Nanotechnology Companies in China**

*Seven Iranian companies, active in the field of nanotechnology, participated in Chinano2016 International Exhibition on 26-28 October 2016 in China, with the aim of introducing their latest achievements and advanced products. Fanavaran Nano Meghyas, Behran Filter, Nanosakhtar Mehrasa, Kian Rangin, Ramo Alibert, Sevin Plasma, and Tavana are among the Iranian companies that participated in Chinano2016, and visitors could see their latest products in a 90 square meter pavilion. Concurrent with the exhibition, the Second Sino Iran Nanotechnology Business Matchmaking Event was held with the participation of Iranian and Chinese parties. The companies signed five contracts and memorandums of agreement, and continued negotiations on the related issues.... Among the contracts signed between the Iranian and Chinese companies, the following are worth mentioning:*

- *Memorandum of understanding between Sevin Plasma Company and Da Tina Green Company*
- *A sales agreement between Sevin Plasma and Da Tina Green for an electrospinning machine*
- *An ultrasonic device contract to Nanjing University*
- *A scientific and technological memorandum of agreement between Iranian and Chinese nanotechnology centers and Shanghai Nanotechnology Promotion Center*
- *Memorandum of understanding on laboratorial services between the Iran Nanotech China Center and the Taiwanese company of Bio Ma Tek*



Iran Nanotech China Center Unveiling Ceremony.  
Source: Nano.ir, [goo.gl/3IRmjC](http://goo.gl/3IRmjC), public domain





## Iran and Russia Upgrade Cooperation

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian-Iranian relationship may very well be the most significant diplomatic romance of the 21st century. The accompanying excerpt from the joint statement between Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Russian President Vladimir Putin taken from Rouhani's official website details a broad range of issues covered by the two leaders during their Moscow summit on 27-28 March. The two leaders seem united in their animosity to the United States.

As the passage notes, the leaders “emphasized the illegitimacy of imposing unilateral sanctions for the sake of advancing political aims.” Their castigation of unilateralism in American foreign policy is ironic given Russian actions in Georgia and Ukraine, and Iranian military involvement in Yemen and Syria. The leaders also “denounced the attempts to use force or the threat of force in the information space, such as an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities with the help of the Stuxnet malware.” The joint condemnation of alleged hacking is also ironic given the recent aggressive cyber strategies of both Iran and Russia.

The leaders also “hailed the launch of the Moscow dialogue aiming to find the ways to promote peace settlement in Afghanistan.” This suggests that their cooperation in Iraq against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is seen as the foundation for a broader alliance rather than a limited operation. That both leaders tackled the narcotics trade arising from Afghanistan opium production is an acknowledgment that both countries increasingly suffer from consumption and are not simply trafficking countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The two sides have denounced the attempts to use force...in the information space.”*

**Source:** “Tahqaq-e Kemal Naqshah Rah Ejraye Pruzheh-haye Hamkari Tehran va Moscow (The Full Realization of the Roadmap for the Implementation of Cooperative Projects between Tehran and Moscow),” *President.ir*, 28 March 2017. <http://www.president.ir/fa/98429>

### **Documents for New Iran-Russia Cooperation**

*Hojjat al-Islam Hassan Rouhani and Vladimir Putin emphasized in a joint statement on the full realization of the roadmaps of industrial and commercial cooperation between Russia and Iran for the years 2016-2020 and the full text of the joint statement is as follows:*

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

*Joint Statement of the leaders of Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation:*

*Moscow—on the dates 7 and 8 Farvardin 1396 corresponding to 27 and 28 March 2017 during the official visit to Russia, the leaders of Russia and Iran, in an atmosphere of friendship and trust, studied extensively the status and prospects of Iran-Russia relations and major regional and international issues...*

*They also emphasized the illegitimacy of imposing unilateral sanctions for the sake of advancing political aims...*

*Russia and Iran stand for elaborating rules under the UN aegis for states' conduct in the information space and...expressed their concern over the steadily rising number of the instances of using information and communication technologies for criminal, terrorist, military and political goals. The two sides have denounced the attempts to use force or the threat of force in the information space, such as an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities with the help of the Stuxnet malware, and also any attempts to involve information and communication techniques for harmful purposes...*

*The two presidents hailed the launch of the Moscow dialogue aiming to find the ways to promote peace settlement in Afghanistan and to give an impetus to the process of national reconciliation in that country.*

*[Rouhani and Putin] expressed mutual concern over the growth of drug production in Afghanistan which poses a threat to peace and stability, socio-economic development and security of Afghanistan and other states,” the statement stressed. “The sides pointed to the necessity of the implementation of concrete measures to eliminate global production of drugs, including to uproot illegally sowed narcotic-containing crops and to do away with their processing.”*

*...Russia and Iran support preserving Iraq's territorial integrity, stand for lifting the blockade on Yemen, positively assess the Lebanon political process and express the hope for the fair settlement of the Palestinian problem.*



Presidents Hassan Rouhani and Vladimir Putin at a press conference.

Source: President.ir, <http://media.president.ir/uploads/org/149071360679654800.jpg>, public domain.



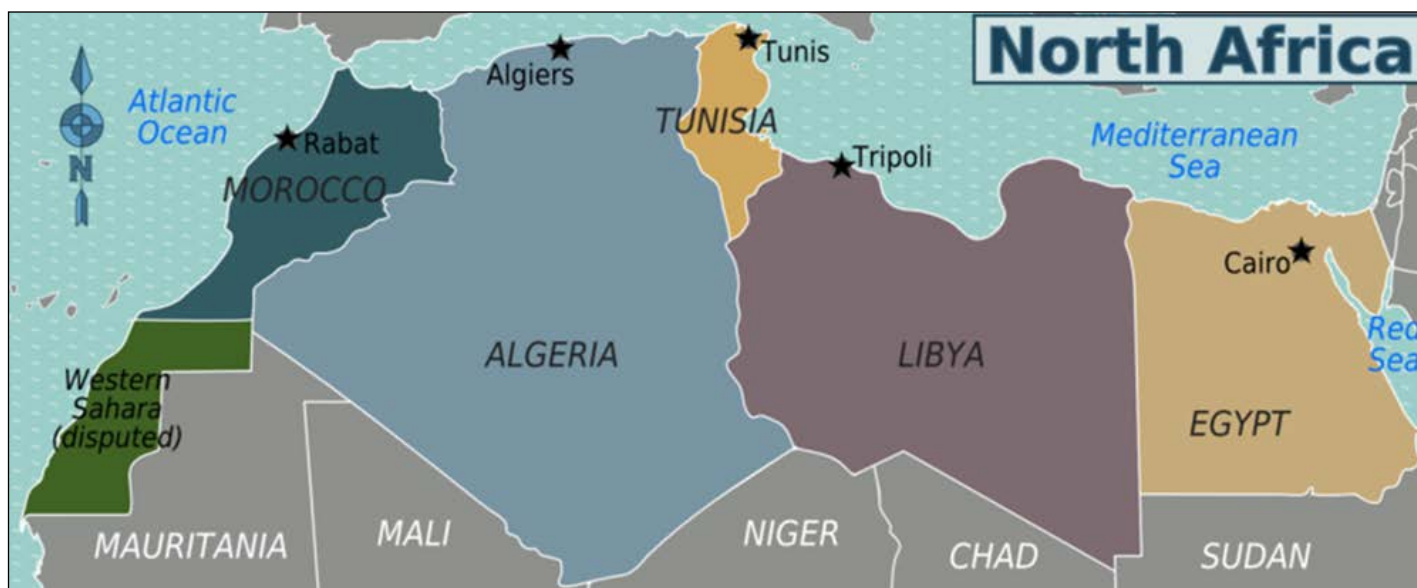
## Russia's North African Foothold

**OE Watch Commentary:** The ongoing debate over whether there can be a military solution to the Libyan conflict is illustrated by the first two accompanying passages. The first, an analytical piece from Qatar's *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies*, argues that "no single party to Libya's multi-player civil war will ever triumph entirely" and thus "the only way out for the country would be for the political factions to work together toward a peaceful reconstruction." The alternate view holds that the Libyan National Army (LNA), which is headed by Khalifa Haftar and controls much of Libya's eastern half, is the single force capable of ending the conflict. As the author of the second accompanying passage claims, writing in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahram*: "the key means of ending the conflict is to militarily strengthen Haftar's forces." Proponents of this viewpoint argue that the UN arms embargo on Libya should be lifted in order to arm the LNA.

Moscow has inserted itself in the conversation over Libya's future by effectively playing to both sides of this argument. In a nod to supporters of the Tripoli-based internationally recognized government, Russian diplomats have reached out to Libya's various factions as well as to Libya's neighbors in an attempt to mediate a political settlement. At the same time, Moscow has publicly displayed support for the LNA, which has a long wish list of Russian weapons, including advanced fighter jets and S-300 air defense systems. Having regained control of Libya's major oil export terminals, Haftar's military has the funds to pay for such purchases. According to the third accompanying passage, Russia may furthermore seek to revive a 2008 agreement made with the Qaddafi regime by which Russia was to establish a naval base in territory currently under LNA control.

Russia's foothold in Libya is now taken for granted in most Arabic-language media. The purported expansion of Russian influence in North Africa has become self-reinforcing and has shifted the calculus of important actors in the region. Among the least considered are the effects on Tunisia, which is Libya's only Mediterranean neighbor to never fall under the Soviet orbit during the Cold War. As the fourth accompanying passage highlights, Russia has encouraged its citizens to visit Tunisia despite recent terrorist attacks; in doing so it has helped prop up this vital but struggling economic sector. Furthermore, as the author notes, "regional and international changes sooner or later push a country like Tunisia closer to the Russian Bear," particularly given that Westerners are preoccupied by "their internal and occasionally petty matters." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

*"... Various Libyan and Arab parties have begun welcoming Moscow's "potentially effective" role. Moscow welcomes this and has capitalized on it ..."*



North Africa Map.  
Source: By Peter Fitzgerald (Own work based on the blank worldmap), via Wikimedia Commons  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ANorth\\_Africa\\_regions\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ANorth_Africa_regions_map.png), CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)

**Source:** ليبيا: الصراع على الهلال النفطي وأثره في مسارات الأزمة  
"The Scramble for the Oil Crescent and the Fight to Control Libya,"  
*Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies*, 23 March 2017. <http://www.dohainstitute.org/release/3509c808-a23d-4170-bf56-74b840786328> (English version: <http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/84dc163e-c0cc-4a7f-ac12-621e940877c1>)

*Given Libya's complex tribal and regional composition, the political headache this is causing for the GNA as well as for others, as well as the matrix of international interests at work, it seems that no single party to Libya's multi-player civil war will ever triumph entirely. The only way out for the country would be for the political factions to work together toward a peaceful reconstruction along the terms defined by the Sukhairat Agreement, which already has the backing of a majority of Libya's political factions. The alternative would be for a continuation of the ongoing conflict and the furtherance of political interests at odds with the national interests of the Libyan people and their right to live in dignity and peace, in a country with a representative form of government.*

**Source:** ما هو نمط النفوذ الروسى فى ليبيا؟  
Jihad Awada, "What is the model for Russian influence in Libya?"  
*al-Ahram*, 11 February 2017. <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/578504.aspx>

*It is well known that France played a pivotal role in the grueling negotiations to convince Italy, Great Britain and Germany of the need to support Haftar as head of the LNA, since it is the only military force capable of bringing stability back to Libya... Russia, the West and the United States have become convinced that the Libyan conflict must end and that the key means of ending the conflict is to militarily strengthen Haftar's forces.*

(continued)





## Continued: Russia's North African Foothold

**Source:** ليبيا تتحول إلى ساحة صراع بين روسيا والغرب  
Mustapha Dalaa, "Libya becomes a battleground between Russia and the West," *Andalou News Agency*, 17 January 2017. <https://goo.gl/uIhGxL>

*According to Dr. Jawad al-Hamed, a Jordanian strategic analyst and the head of the Middle East Studies Center in Jordan, "Russia will not abide by the international weapons embargo on Libya." He does not dismiss the likelihood of "Moscow invoking the agreement signed with the Qaddafi regime in 2008, which was to be implemented in 2010." Among its clauses in the establishing of a Russian naval base in Benghazi along the lines of the Russian naval base in Tartous, Syria. According to Arab diplomatic sources, Haftar hopes to reach an agreement worth 1.8 billion dollars that includes purchasing approximately 20 fighter jets, S-300 Air Defense Systems, T-90 tanks and the upgrading of 140 T-72 tanks. According to the same sources, during his last trip to Moscow on 27 November, Haftar asked to buy twelve Sukhoi Su-35 and Su30s and four training Yakovlev Yak-130s.*

**Source:** روسيا على حدود تونس  
Salahaddin al-Jawarshi, "Russia on the Tunisian Border," *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 14 March 2017. <https://goo.gl/SNOplH>

*Various Libyan and Arab parties have begun welcoming Moscow's "potentially effective" role. Moscow welcomes this and has capitalized on it to strengthen its position and influence in this large and enticing oil country. Thus Tunisia finds itself needing to develop its relationships with Russia and to correct what has been lost in the past... Russia has also not done what the Europeans and Americans have in terms of encouraging their citizens to stay away from Tunisia due to terrorism concerns following the Bardo Museum and Sousse hotel attacks. To the contrary, Moscow has encouraged Russians to visit Tunisia and there are over 600,000 Russian tourists, which has helped alleviate Tunisian tourism's crisis. Thus do the regional and international changes sooner or later push a country like Tunisia closer to the Russian Bear, which now has a foothold in broken Libya, as Westerners focus on their internal and occasionally petty matters.*

## Iran and the Syrian Conflict's Shifting Loyalties

**OE Watch Commentary:** Outside of rebel and loyalist bastions, allegiances in Syria are more fluid than they might otherwise appear. The accompanying four passages, taken from various Arabic-language media outlets, highlight this fluidity as well as Iran's efforts to capitalize on it. The first accompanying excerpt focuses on Syria's northeast province of Hasakah, a quintessentially "tribal" part of Syria where "no single tribe in the entire province [has taken] a unified stance in the conflict." Loyalties are often driven by the quest for material benefit and social prestige, and they shift "depending on the balance of power."

The paradigm of shifting loyalties can be found in the story of Fadel Salim, a summary of which appeared in the Syrian opposition *Enab al-Baladi* newspaper in mid-February and is excerpted alongside this commentary. Salim was born in a rural village of Hasakah Province, studied law at Damascus University and after graduation returned to his home province to work for the lawyers syndicate. When protests broke out in 2011 he joined the rebellion and after being briefly detained, he left for Jordan and then Turkey, where he became a member

(continued)

**Source:** عشائر الجزيرة السورية: الولاء للأقوى  
Samer al-Ahmad, "Syrian Jazirah Tribes: Loyalty to the Strongest," *al-Modon*, 19 February 2017. <https://goo.gl/XgQlp8>

*There are many like Salim and Jarba who have shifted their loyalties over the past years.... the regime often created their own leaders from marginalized families, giving them the power to mediate with the regime over detainees... the growing number of leaders in a single tribe led to fractures in most of Hassaka's tribes, with no single tribe in the entire province taking a unified stance in the conflict... many of the sheikhs have switched sides depending on the balance of power... tribal loyalties in the Jazirah fluctuate according to changes in interests... new changes in tribal loyalties may be on the horizon, following information that Iran has become yet another of the parties with multiple goals and interests in the Syrian Jazirah, through its Popular Mobilization militias. Kurdish units may be losing some of their western support, and Russia is expected to withdraw support for the regime in Qamishli and withdraw from the area.*

**Source:** محام من الحسكة.. من "المجلس الوطني" إلى "داعش" ثم "الإدارة الذاتية" الكردية  
"A lawyer from Hasakah... From the National Assembly to ISIS to Kurdish self-rule," *Enab Baladi*, 15 February 2017. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/131615>

*Fadel Salim was born in 1978 in the village of al-Fadghami in the southern countryside of Hasakah Province. He graduated from the University of Damascus School of Law and then worked as a lawyer in Hasakah's lawyers syndicate. He was arrested for a few days early in the revolution against the Assad regime, and then left for Jordan and then Turkey, where he joined the "Supreme Revolutionary Council" for Hasakah Province, and then the "National Assembly" representing the revolution. According to a former member of the council, Salim went from Turkey to France seeking asylum, but he was expelled from France under unclear circumstances, after which he returned to Syria and pledged allegiance to ISIS... According to a media activist in Hasakah, Fadel Salim has recently begun working to "regularize his status" with the Kurdish PYD, which controls the self-governing parts of the Syrian Jazirah. He added that Salim had joined the Kurdish self-governing judicial system to work as a lawyer, although *Enab Baladi* was unable to confirm this.*

(continued)



## Continued: Iran and the Syrian Conflict's Shifting Loyalties

of the main rebel political organization. He later sought asylum in France but left under “mysterious circumstances.” Upon returning to his home province he pledged allegiance to ISIS and became a legal advisor for the group; most recently he is rumored to be seeking a position in Syria’s Kurdish regional government.

Fadel Salim’s home province of Hasakah is located in Syria’s northeast corner, bordering both Iraq and Turkey. According to the first accompanying passage, “new changes in tribal loyalties may be on the horizon” in this area due to an expected decrease in Western support for Kurdish forces in Hasakah and the expectation that Moscow will disengage from the province. This could in turn pave the way for Iraq’s pro-Iranian Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to recruit from Hasakah’s fragmented tribal population. The PMF are deployed in areas west of Mosul just across the Syria-Iraq border and have hinted at moving into Syrian territory.

Iranian influence may also be growing in the opposite corner of Syria, along the contested Golan Province bordering Israel to Syria’s southwest. The province is home to the loyalist “Golan Brigade,” which as the third passage details, is made up of former Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters from towns in the Syrian Golan who switched back to the government side in 2014. Some believe that this group has fallen under Iran’s influence, perhaps as part of the “Golan Liberation Brigade,” the formation of which was announced in early March by an Iran-backed Iraqi militia that is active in Syria. Indeed, in mid-March a Golan Brigade member named Yasser al-Said was killed by an Israeli drone, in what an Israeli military analyst cited in the fourth passage called “a message that Israel will not allow Iran and Hezbollah to open fronts against it from the Golan.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

**Source:** Nour Samaha, “How these Syrians went from opposition fighters to pro-regime militiamen,” *Al-Monitor*, 3 April 2017. <http://al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/syria-south-opposition-defection-army-israel.html>

*The Golan Regiment came into existence in 2014; based in Quneitra province, it is the first pro-government armed group made up of former Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters... In 2011, Hammoud, a soldier in the Syrian army, defected after consistently bad treatment by his superiors and the Syrian authorities... But for Hammoud, there were question marks over some of the other opposition groups they were fighting alongside... it was a combination of factors that convinced them to switch sides. They pointed to the corruption within the opposition groups, the fact they were being ordered to carry out battles according to the whims of their foreign financiers and the idea that some groups had few qualms about working with Israel. It was at that point they decided to make contact with the government again... Today, the Golan Regiment operates in one of the most sensitive areas in Syria.*

**Source:** قاتيل في القنيطرة السورية في غارة لطائرة اسرائيلية بدون طيار “Israeli UAV strike kills one in Syria’s Quneitra,” *al-Bawaba*, 19 March 2017. <https://goo.gl/B8HXSO>

*In a related context, the military analyst on the Hebrew channel 10 Alon Ben David said that “the killing of Yasser al-Said by Israel is a message that Israel will not allow Iran and Hizbullah to open fronts against it from the Golan”... “Iran was using al-Said to strike Israel”... “Israel fears that the Assad regime will bring Hizbullah and Iran into the Golan, thus providing Iran with a border with Israel.”*

“...many of the sheikhs have switched sides depending on the balance of power ...”

Map of Syria with Hasaka Province highlighted.

Source: By TUBS, via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AAI-Hasakah\\_in\\_Syria\\_\(%2BGolan\\_hatched\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AAI-Hasakah_in_Syria_(%2BGolan_hatched).svg), GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)







## South Africa: Protests Against President as Credit Rating Sinks to Junk Status

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 7 April, tens of thousands of South Africans took to the streets to protest President Jacob Zuma's decision to fire his respected finance minister, Pravin Gordhan. That sacking has rattled the ruling African National Congress (ANC) Party, the people, and, as the first accompanying article discusses, international confidence in the economy. Combined with other concerns regarding the government, especially its likelihood not to be able to cover expenditures with revenue, international rating agencies have downgraded South Africa's credit rating to junk status. Thus, the continent's largest economy after Nigeria will now have to pay more to finance its sovereign debt. This will result in decreased funds available for development programs, leaving large numbers of poor less likely to climb out of poverty. It also adds fuel to the fire of political instability.

Zuma has long been plagued with charges of corruption and fraud. There was even an attempt to impeach him, though that ultimately failed. The criminal charges, the numerous controversies that swirl around him, and several of his political positions have resulted in large swaths of South African society being disillusioned with his governance. Now, with his sacking of the finance minister, many are saying enough is enough. As the second article points out, this means that party unity will suffer, a great deal of effort will have to be expended by the ANC to fend off leadership challenges, and perhaps most important from an economic perspective, the Treasury may not be able to stand firm against spending increases...basically digging a deeper hole.

Other factors have also served as impediments to South Africa's economy. These include a significant amount of crime, a brain drain of skilled professionals, and recurrent labor strife. Still, the country has a large and sophisticated economy, though as the downgrades testify, there are considerable concerns regarding future growth.

It should be noted that the impact of the downgrades to junk status is more than just economic. As the first article points out, much of South Africa's influence on the continent comes from the robustness of its institutions to prevent abuses of power. Unfortunately this time they appear to have failed the country, and as a result South Africa's standing among its fellow African nations looks to have suffered.

South Africa is not alone in having such a poor rating. It now joins others, including Brazil and Russia, in the junk status club. Based on the reviews of the South African government in general and Zuma in particular, the return to investment grade status according to both articles will be a difficult haul, possibly leaving South Africa in that junk status club for a very long time. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“..Dr Iraj Abedian, Chief Executive at the Pan-African Investment and Research Services, Johannesburg, said [the South African] government had ‘lost its creditworthiness’ — the rating agency did not believe or trust that there was policy consistency, that there was cohesion within Cabinet for it to be trusted with investment grade and that there were prospects of turning the economy around.”*



Zuma Must Fall Protesters, April 2017.

Source: Discott [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zuma\\_Must\\_Fall\\_protesters\\_in\\_front\\_of\\_police\\_van.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zuma_Must_Fall_protesters_in_front_of_police_van.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

**Source:** Elizabeth Sidropoulos, “Is anyone listening? Of downgrades, hubris and redemption,” *South African Institute of International Affairs*, 4 April 2017. <http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/is-anyone-listening-of-downgrades-hubris-and-redemption>

*From the increased costs of financing the sovereign debt to higher interests rates, rising food and petrol prices, reduced confidence in the economy and the attendant impact on the fiscus, our newfound #junkstatus will leave us poorer and less able to tackle our underlying developmental problems.*

*When [President Zuma] fires ministers that are performing but retains others that are blatantly not, he lunges at the heart of the social contract between the leader and citizens, which is based on trust.*

**Source:** Jillian Green, “Fitch downgrades SA to junk status,” *Daily Maverick (South Africa)*, 7 April 2017. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-04-07-breaking-fitch-downgrades-sa-to-junk-status/#.W0mObIWcGcw>

*Commenting on the Standard&Poor downgrade earlier this week, Dr Iraj Abedian, Chief Executive at the Pan-African Investment and Research Services, Johannesburg, said government had “lost its creditworthiness” — the rating agency did not believe or trust that there was policy consistency, that there was cohesion within Cabinet for it to be trusted with investment grade and that there were prospects of turning the economy around.*

*“This is the consequence of a government misbehaving,” said Abedian. However, Fitch believes that following the government reshuffle, fiscal consolidation will be less of a priority given the president’s focus on ‘radical socioeconomic transformation’.*





## South Africa's Military Declines as Budgets Fall Short

**OE Watch Commentary:** Three years ago South Africa's Defense Review, a lengthy document evaluating the country's military capabilities, sounded an alarm. The South African National Defense Force (SANDF) was deemed to be in a state of decline and unable to fulfill its duties. The Review urged immediate actions be taken to stem the deterioration and begin a recovery. However, as the accompanying article relates, those actions never took place, and now the military is in even worse shape than it was three years ago when the report was first issued.

The main obstacle to the military's rehabilitation is money. Defense spending was approximately 3% of GDP in 1994. By 2014 it had dropped to around 1.2%. The Minister of Defense would like a defense budget of about 2%, similar to that of Turkey, France, and the United Kingdom. Indeed there are plans to increase military spending, but with impending financial woes from the country's recent credit rating downgrade to junk status—detailed in a different article in this journal—how firm those commitments remain in the face of competing budgetary pressures is uncertain.

The effects of insufficient military funding are especially apparent with regards to infrastructure. Three years ago only 38% of the army's facilities and 50% of the living quarters for soldiers were in decent condition, and several bases were described as unsuitable for human habitation. Despite such findings and strong recommendations to do something about them, no additional funding was forthcoming.

Beyond poor infrastructure at military bases, the lack of adequate funding has had significant security implications. Recently the Minister of Defense described one issue of particular concern: The military does not have the resources to protect the porous borders from the growing cross border crime plaguing parts of the nation.

Estimates are that even with proper funding it would take five years to arrest the decline of the military's capabilities and another five to develop it to an appropriate, albeit limited, level. Budget constraints, however, make that scenario unlikely. The article offers an alternative: scale down the military's commitments and have those met with a smaller, well-trained, highly capable force armed with modern equipment. Until a decision is made—increase funding or scale down—SANDF may find it increasingly difficult to maintain its rank as fifth in Africa for military capabilities and available firepower, as determined by Global Firepower. More importantly, it will be difficult to fulfill all its missions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“The South African National Defense Force (SANDF) is in a “critical state of decline” and is largely incapable of carrying out its constitutional duties.”*



South Africa's military, pictured here during a training exercise, is reportedly declining due to inadequate funding.

Source: US Army Africa, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shared\\_Accord\\_2013.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shared_Accord_2013.jpg), Originated Flickr, [\*\*Source:\*\* Savo Heleta, “South Africa’s army is in steady decline and nothing’s being done to fix it,” \*The Conversation \(South Africa\)\*, 5 April 2017. <https://theconversation.com/south-africas-army-is-in-steady-decline-and-nothings-being-done-to-fix-it-74712>](https://www.flickr.com/photos/usarmyafrika/9451752612/in/photolist-fpdGKW-6Rm1Pf-fqnv2w-k1PoVP-55GNLS-8U8Vf-8U8fQE-6TwG1A-fCdyqm-dYJVIE-9J1SGf-fkZMn7-a6ESct-9oCnXr-9xZytq-9HY1WX-7Loxsu-R4FCts-2ChvZc-k1QY7f-8U5cbp-2Cho7D-8Y32JW-btdS2j-8U5chB-2Cg5mz-dYJVke-ff3xyV-dYDdt4-RLBNvE-RLBCvu-6e11T2-2CkrW7-fMPec4-5fxsnY-R4FnSJ-S7Apaq-2CmQ7J-2CggEX-fkZMm3-SaceTX-dYJvNnU-RLBeUs-dYDdpH-foyBt7-2CfUwX-R4FDio-fkZMJG-2Cgo5k-Sac1m6, CC BY-SA 2.0.</a></p>
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*The South African National Defense Force (SANDF) is in a “critical state of decline” and is largely incapable of carrying out its constitutional duties.*

*The Review noted that the army couldn’t afford its main operating systems, was unable to meet standing defense commitments, lacked critical mobility and was “too poorly equipped and funded to execute the widening spectrum of tasks to the desired level”.*

*The army’s dire situation has arisen because the government hasn’t provided sufficient funds for the SANDF over the past two decades.*

*During the intervening three years the government has shown no urgency to help the SANDF develop into a capable force.*





## South Sudan: As Famine Worsens, Criticism Over Military Spending

**OE Watch Commentary:** The “guns versus butter” model in macroeconomics essentially posits that a nation with finite resources, when choosing whether to invest in military or civilian goods, cannot increase the purchase of one without reducing the amount it can have of the other. As the accompanying article relates, South Sudan is mainly going with the military goods, thereby reducing the amount of money available for civilian ones, in this case, food. Given that South Sudan is in the midst of a civil war, weapons purchases by the military are understandable. However, the country is also in the midst of a severe famine, and with at least half of its sizeable oil revenues going to arms, there is a growing outcry to redirect some of that money to foodstuffs. Compounding the situation has been the government blocking aid workers. Without additional food, experts predict that approximately 5.5 million people could be facing starvation by July.

Weapons destined for South Sudanese government forces often enter at border points with Sudan and Uganda, and to a lesser extent the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Egypt has also shipped military hardware to the country, including small arms, ammunition, and armored vehicles. Then there is the curious case of two L39 jets from Ukraine that were sold to Uganda but somehow are possibly now in South Sudan. The opposition forces, in comparison, have received relatively limited supplies of weapons and ammunition, though they are still a force to be reckoned with. Against this backdrop, there have been several past calls for arms embargoes, though these have fallen through despite concerns of possible genocide in this nascent nation embroiled in interethnic warfare. Additional efforts to implement such an embargo may finally come to fruition by the time this commentary is published, though with porous borders it is uncertain how effective one would be.

Approximately 97% of South Sudan’s budget is derived from oil revenue. As the accompanying article states, an estimated \$243 million poured into the coffers from late March to late October 2016. The article also states how arms deals continue to be signed while the famine worsens. The situation is particularly dire in Unity State where presently 100,000 people are dying of starvation and another one million are on the verge of the same fate. A UN report blames the famine on protracted conflict, particularly the repeated government launched military operations. Thus, the famine is being fueled by heavily armed soldiers on military missions, and the government response has been to spend more on the soldiers’ armaments than food for the people. In other words, more weapons, less food. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“The government continued to sign arms deals as a famine was declared in Unity State, where 100,000 people are dying of starvation and a further one million people are near starvation.”*



South Sudanese soldiers near Juba. The South Sudanese government is accused of purchasing weapons for the military at the expense of food during the famine.

Source: VOA, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPLA\\_soldiers\\_near\\_Juba\\_\(April\\_2016\)\\_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPLA_soldiers_near_Juba_(April_2016)_1.jpg), Originated <http://www.voanews.com/a/government-soldiers-leave-juba-before-rebel-leaders-return/3286194.html>, public domain

**Source:** “South Sudan buys weapons during famine,” *The Daily Monitor (Uganda)*, 19 Mar 2017. <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/South-Sudan-buys-weapons-during-famine/688334-3855426-klhkhknz/index.html>

*The government continued to sign arms deals as a famine was declared in Unity State, where 100,000 people are dying of starvation and a further one million people are near starvation.*

*“Weapons continue to flow into South Sudan from diverse sources, often with the coordination of neighbouring countries,” said the report by a UN panel of experts.*

*The government is blocking access for humanitarian aid workers, compounding the food crisis, while significant population displacement is also contributing to the famine.*

*“The bulk of evidence suggests that the famine in Unity State has resulted from protracted conflict and, in particular, the cumulative toll of repeated military operations undertaken by the government in southern Unity beginning in 2014,” said the report.*









## Somalia's Troops Have a High Expectation for Their New President: Being Paid

**OE Watch Commentary:** It is one of the most basic functions of maintaining a military...paying the troops in a timely manner. However, as the accompanying article relates, Somalia's soldiers have gone without pay for twelve months and are angry. Despite orders to remain in their barracks and out of the city limits, bands of soldiers have protested in the capital, Mogadishu.

Certainly morale suffers greatly when troops are not paid within a reasonable period. However, there are other adverse consequences. During a similar situation in 2015, the UN Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea warned that the war against terrorism in Somalia could be jeopardized because the unpaid troops might sell their weapons and/or join the militants. In an impoverished country with large families living on the edge, such actions were quite conceivable then, and with history repeating itself, quite conceivable now.

Somali troops join a list of African militaries that have been slow to pay their troops. Delays in full payment of salaries have even occurred among troops serving under the African Union banner. Issues with military salaries are sometimes complicated by the fact that several revenue streams, often from foreign governments, are utilized for military ops. Still, a year long delay in pay is extremely difficult for a soldier no matter what the reason.

Entering this fray is newly elected Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who has made it a priority to ensure the welfare of the military and police, and who is looking for a good relationship with the military. During his past stint as Prime Minister, the troops were paid, and the military is looking for the same now that he is President.

Soldiers burning tires on the streets of Mogadishu serve as a testament to the difficulties that can arise when a country, having endured years of chaos, struggles to pay its military. With the Somali government being notoriously slow, the economy beset by difficulties, and much of the attention directed towards the severe famine engulfing parts of the nation, as the article reports these gatherings by the soldiers serve as a reminder to this new government to fulfill its promise of paying them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“The protests are the first real clash between the new administration and military which had high expectation[s of] President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo whose manifesto prioritized welfare of the army and police.”*

**Source:** “Somalia: Army Servicemen Demonstrated in Mogadishu Due [to Lack] of Salary, *Dalsan Radio (Somalia) AllAfrica.com*, 13 March 2017. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201703140327.html>

*Normal activities came to a stand still as bands of Somalia National Army servicemen demonstrated in parts of Mogadishu creating tension...*

*The protests are the first real clash between the new administration and military which had high expectation on President Mohamed. Abdullahi Farmaajo whose manifesto prioritized welfare of the army and police.*

*Last week the government had been ordered out of the city limits and into the barracks but today's protest is a clear sign that the military has defied the orders.*

Somali soldiers, such as the ones pictured here during a training exercise, are optimistic the new president will get them paid.

Source: AMISOM Public Information through Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somali\\_National\\_Army\\_Training\\_Pass-out\\_Parade\\_08\\_\(7092793865\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somali_National_Army_Training_Pass-out_Parade_08_(7092793865).jpg) Originated Flickr [https://www.flickr.com/photos/au\\_unistphotostream/7092793865/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/7092793865/), CC by FlickrreviewR 0.0., CCO 1.0 public domain.





## Repression and Resistance in Cameroon's Anglophone Community

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Anglophone portion of Cameroon is growing increasingly angry. As described in the accompanying article, this is due to the discriminatory treatment they endure at the hands of the Francophone dominated government. The result has been an escalating spiral of repression by government security forces and hardening resistance to that repression by the English speaking population. However, to truly understand the situation, one must first take a brief look at part of Cameroon's history.

After World War I, the German colony of Kamerun was partitioned between France and Great Britain, with the larger portion going to France, by mandates from the League of Nations. French Cameroon gained independence in 1961. The following year the northern portion of British Cameroon, which was largely Muslim, voted to attach itself to Nigeria and the southern, mostly Christian part to the Republic of Cameroon, formed the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Initially the British and French regions remained relatively autonomous, but that changed in 1972 when a new constitution was adopted. This resulted in a loss of autonomy for the former British section of Cameroon. The ensuing discrimination against its English speaking people explains the deep roots of the present crisis.

As the article describes, among the charges leveled against the security forces are that they have been responsible for detentions, torture, killing unarmed protesters, and disappearances. The government also initiated a shutdown of the internet in the Anglophone region, crippling an area known as "Silicon Mountain" where dozens of start-up companies are located. It wasn't just businesses that suffered; schools and hospitals also struggled with the lack of internet access.

Cameroon's Anglophone population increasingly feel economically marginalized and resentful that the French legal and education systems are being imposed upon them. Additionally as the article points out, they complain their voices are not being heard in the rest of Africa; that Africa's leaders and media are ignoring the situation. So far the African Union's response has been to express concern and ask for a dialogue to help resolve the crisis...a reply largely deemed insufficient by an angry Anglophone population that is growing impatient with the current state of affairs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*"The situation in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon is so scary. A walk in any part of the regions, you will automatically feel like you are in a war zone."*

— A Cameroonian activist



The Anglophone region of Cameroon, originally part of British Cameroon, is in orange.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southern\\_cameroon\\_map.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southern_cameroon_map.JPG), Originated CIA World Factbook, public domain.

**Source:** Kumi Naidoo, "Africa ignores Cameroon crisis as human rights abuses mount," *Pambazuka News*, 16 March 2107. <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/africa-ignores-cameroon-crisis-human-rights-abuses-mount>

*"The situation in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon is so scary. A walk in any part of the regions, you will automatically feel like you are in a war zone." [A Cameroonian activist]*

*An internet blockade that has been in effect since mid-January has cut off internet access and disrupted cellular services for millions of Cameroonians in the English-speaking regions.*

*In October, lawyers and teachers launched strikes to demand greater inclusion of English-speaking professionals in the legal and teaching sectors. Weeks later, civil society organizations called for public demonstrations in support of the strikes and in protest against the "marginalization and deprivation" of English-speaking Cameroonians by the Francophone-dominated government of President Paul Biya. The government response was to dispatch security forces to quash dissent.*

*It is also worrying and disappointing that a crisis of these proportions, which has implications not only for Cameroon but the region and the continent, is not getting the attention it deserves from African leaders and African media.*





## Doubt over Peace Talks in Mali

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Algiers Agreement of 2015 was intended to restore peace and stability to northern Mali, but many hurdles remain. On 3 March, the French-language publication *Liberation* published the excerpted article detailing the perspectives of various Malian rebel factions on the latest developments related to this agreement. The article provides insight into the difficulties surrounding the agreement.

As the article discusses, one hurdle to its implementation is that civilians are concerned that former rebels who become part of the new regional government in parts of northern Mali are not fit to rule nor do they have the legitimacy of having been elected. Even a rebel representative admitted, according to the article, that the rebels are not trained for governance, but only for fighting. There is also a risk that the former rebels who have not been included in the new regional government will fear their interests will not be taken into account. Thus some former rebels have been protesting outside the regional assembly building against what they perceive to be their exclusion from the peace process.

The international community, meanwhile, is dismayed by the slow progress of the reconciliation. There are suspicions that the Malian government is dragging its feet because of its lack of interest in dealing with former rebel groups that will join pro-government militias and the Malian army in a new 600-soldier battalion in northern Mali. It has only been a few years that the rebels had taken up arms against the army. Some soldiers also believe this new battalion may serve the purpose of stopping ordinary crime in cities but will not be effective against major security threats, such as terrorism and drug trafficking. The real purpose of the battalion is not so much counter-terrorism, some rebels say, but to restore confidence between the ex-rebels, pro-government militias and army or, as the French Defense Minister said, to be an important “symbolic step forward for the country.”

But how much the soldiers in this battalion can tolerate being symbolic while al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) reboots its operations and alliances in Mali is questionable. As the article describes, an AQIM suicide bomber killed nearly 80 members of the Malian army at an air base in Gao in January 2017, just one month before the new battalion became operational.

In addition, the article notes that there have been recent attacks in Burkina Faso, after which the militants retreated into Malian territory. A new group operating in Burkina Faso is called Ansaroul Islam, which is a sub-affiliate of the central Mali-based Katiba Macina [Macina is the name of a historical Fulani Islamic emirate in central Mali]. In March 2017, a new AQIM umbrella group Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin was formed, with the goal of expanding the insurgency in Mali and Burkina Faso via Ansaroul Islam by catering to ethnic narratives and grievances.

While peace efforts lag, the insurgents appear to be only increasing their capabilities against this backdrop; the viability of the new battalion and the overall ability to implement the Algiers Agreement has come into sharp focus. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“We are rebels, we know nothing about the functioning of communities. We are not trained for that!”*

**Source:** “Peace in Mali: Fragile Hope (Paix au Mali: l’espoir fragile),” *Liberation*, 3 March 2017. [http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2017/03/03/paix-au-mali-l-espoir-fragile\\_1552847](http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2017/03/03/paix-au-mali-l-espoir-fragile_1552847)

*For the past year and a half, the appointment of an “interim authority”—supposedly the result of a consensus between the ex-rebels and the government—has been the subject of endless negotiations. In Gao, the nomination of this authority was almost blocked: the regional assembly had been occupied for three days by a dissident armed movement, which challenged the arrival of the man appointed to take the lead. “The population is worried, it does not want to end up with an administration in the hands of the armed groups,” affirmed Mohamed Attaib Sidibé, president of Ganda Izo, an important militia of the North. “We are rebels, we know nothing about the functioning of communities. We are not trained for that!” The blockage comes mainly from the fact that some groups were created recently and do not feel represented and demand places in the administration. Moreover, this narrative of the demonstrations against the interim authorities is instrumentalized by the government, which is dragging its feet to avoid having to deal with the armed movements. The installation of the interim authorities is nevertheless scrutinized by the international community, which is exhausted by the delay in the peace process.*

*The second “leg” of the Algiers Agreement is the establishment of the Operational Coordination Mechanisms (OMCs): battalions of 600 men made up of equal numbers of rebel ex-combatants, pro-government militias, and the Malian army. In Gao, nearly 80 of them were killed, on January 18, in a car bomb attack claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The French Defense Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, welcomed the patrols as “so symbolic, so important ... important pledges for the future.”*

## When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609\\_Grau\\_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609_Grau_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf)





## Not Guillermo Lasso

**OE Watch Commentary:** Ecuadorans held their final-round presidential elections on 2 April. (See: “Guillermo Lasso,” *OE Watch*, April 2017.) The two finalist candidates were Lenín Voltaire Moreno Garcés and Guillermo Alberto Santiago Lasso Mendoza. Lenín Moreno won, dashing the prediction this commenter made last month. Moreno represents a continuation of the Bolivarian (pro-Venezuela/ pro Cuba/ Marxist socialist) policies of the out-going Bolivarian regime of Rafael Correa. Although Lasso called for a recount, none was authorized by the Ecuadoran election commission. Moreno enjoyed the advantages of incumbency, potentially including vote tampering. He was Rafael Correa’s vice president for six years, and his election can be taken as good news for the region’s political left, which had been experiencing a continuous series of electoral defeats around the region. Observers will be keen to see if Moreno fills the shoes of the presidency, or if he is merely a placeholder for Rafael Correa.

Aside from Moreno, big winners are the Maduro regime in Venezuela and with it the Bolivarian project as a whole. Also benefitting is Julian Assange (the founder of WikiLeaks), who has been a guest in the Ecuadoran embassy in London. Had Lasso won, Assange would probably have had to seek alternative dwelling arrangements.

The accompanying reference is from a first major interview, in Spanish, with the president-elect Lenín Moreno. He addresses the accusations of electoral fraud, economic recession, how he will finance his desired programs (foreign debt) and other issues. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Lenín Voltaire Moreno Garcés.

Source: Agencia de Noticias ANDES,  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LENIN\\_MORENO.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LENIN_MORENO.jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0.

**Source:** “Ecuador, Lenin Moreno Programa De Gobierno 06 04 2017 (Ecuador, Lenin Moreno Program of Government 06/04/2017)” *CNN and You Tube*, 6 April 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXtFRxbr5wg>.

*“He is going to finance his social plans with external credit.”*

*“...He is going to finance his social plans with external credit....He says that Guillermo Lasso should accept the defeat with dignity....”*

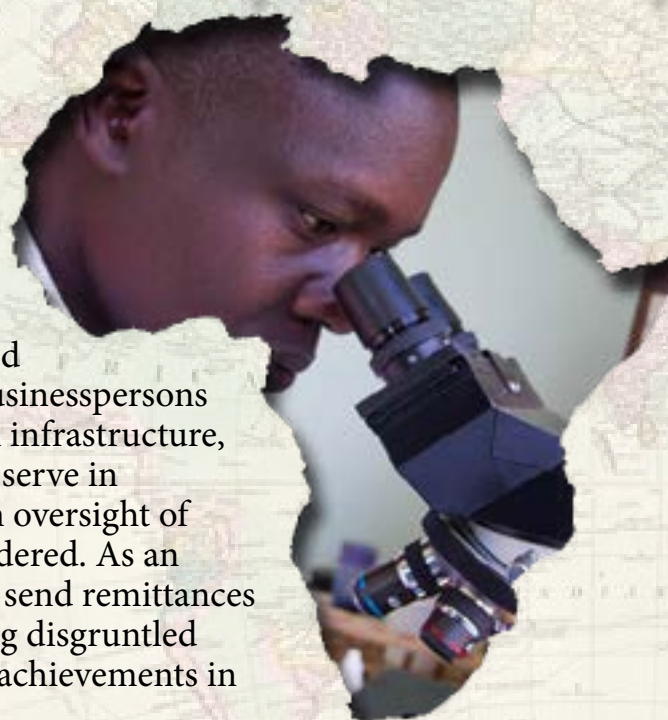
## Africa's Brain Drain: Its Impacts on Security and Stability

By Robert Feldman

Africa is bleeding. Much of its lifeblood, composed of well-educated people who could help tackle its toughest problems, is flowing away. This hemorrhaging of individuals with extensive training constitutes Africa's brain drain. African militaries are not immune to the problem. From the upper echelons of the services where strategic decisions are made, to the lower echelons where technical equipment must be maintained, the lack of qualified individuals is being felt. Loss of educated individuals on the civilian side also affects military capabilities. Fewer businesspersons generate taxable revenue, fewer engineers design roads and other critical infrastructure, and perhaps most damning of all, fewer educated people are available to serve in government jobs and provide, among other functions, important civilian oversight of the armed services. However, there are certain offsets that must be considered. As an example, an African military pilot who takes a position in Europe might send remittances back home. The brain drain also possibly serves as a safety valve, allowing disgruntled individuals who are unable to find positions matching their educational achievements in their home countries to leave and find employment elsewhere.

Military Review, November-December 2012

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Africa's-Brain-Drain.pdf>







## Bolivarians Talking Tough

**OE Watch Commentary:** Venezuela seems to have entered a period of near constant street protests. As the first accompanying passage discusses, in this round of escalations the government has taken to dropping tear gas bombs from helicopters.

On 6 April, during a brief lull in the protest actions, three very senior Bolivarian leaders, Diosdado Cabello, Aristóbulo Istúriz and Freddy Bernal joined to give an especially bellicose harangue to a modest crowd of loyalists. Curious and maybe revealing was a sentence by the most senior leader, who said that the *mayoría* (majority) of soldiers were *muy claros* (very clear), as the second passage reports. It seems odd that the course of an aggressive pep rally he would say that the majority are very clear. This may have been an unintentional admission that indeed the whole force is not committed or loyal. ‘Totally committed’, ‘resolutely obedient’, or ‘ardently loyal’ would have been more normal rhetorical flourishes. Instead, his muddling and subdued measurement of support among the troops might reveal a clear softness in morale within the armed forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...the majority of soldiers (male and female) in the armed forces are very clear”*

**Source:** Editors, “‘Un acto de guerra’: lo que hay detrás del lanzamiento de bombas lacrimógenas desde el aire” (An act of war: what was behind the launching of tear gas bombs from the air), *El Cooperante*, 11 April 2017. <http://elcooperante.com/un-acto-de-guerra-lo-que-hay-detras-del-lanzamiento-de-bombas-lacrimogenas-desde-el-aire/>.

*“State security forces repressed opposition demonstrators trying to reach the center of Caracas for the fifth time this month. This time, however, they went too far. From helicopters that overflew the protest ... they launched tear gas bombs....”*

**Source:** Editors, “Sangre y armas: Los incendiarios discursos de Diosdado, Aristóbulo y Bernal (Blood and weapons: The incendiary speeches of Diosdado, Aristóbulo and Bernal),” *La Patilla*, 6 April 2017. <https://www.lapatilla.com/site/2017/04/06/sangre-y-armas-los-incendiarios-discursos-de-diosdado-aristobulo-y-bernal/>.

*“The incendiary speeches of these three faces of Chavism were led by Cabello, who assured that ‘Not even with blood is there going to be change in Venezuela.’”*

*Cabello also declared that ‘the majority of soldiers (male and female) in the armed forces are very clear’ (loyal?).*

*For his part, Bernal shouted that ‘if the moment comes to take a Kalashnikov to defend Venezuela, we would be ready and willing.’*

*Istúriz, not to be outdone, said to the non-multitude that: Here we are going to defend our Independence with blood if it is necessary.”*



Venezuelans protest in Altamira Square.

Source: By The Photographer (Own work) (CC0), via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AVenezuela\\_protests\\_against\\_the\\_Nicolas\\_Maduro\\_government%2C\\_in\\_Altamira\\_Square\\_40.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AVenezuela_protests_against_the_Nicolas_Maduro_government%2C_in_Altamira_Square_40.JPG), public domain.





## Human Trafficking Activity in Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from Spanish open sources provide insight into human trafficking activity in Colombia. Colombia is a country of origin for human trafficking, with victims commonly sent to Asia, Europe and other Latin American countries. Accurate statistics regarding the number of victims in Colombia are difficult to come by, with some sources reporting as few as 223 victims per year while NGOs put that number at 70,000; 80% of which are said to be women. As the first excerpt notes, the latter number is likely more accurate given that 99% of human trafficking cases are never prosecuted and human trafficking is a crime with nearly complete impunity. The excerpts also detail monetary compensation made from this activity in Colombia alone, which is also alarming.

Colombia has been classified as having the second highest number of human trafficking victims in Latin America following Brazil. Once entrapped, victims are commonly sent to China, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, and the United Arab Emirates. According to the second source, recruitment of human trafficking victims within Colombia generally occurs within the “coffee region.” From these locations, girls may be sent to Bogota to work as prostitutes in local brothels or abroad. According to the third excerpt, Colombia has implemented multiple laws and decrees to end this phenomenon; but many are not enacted nor is there a budget to effectively fight human trafficking in the country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“... 99% of human trafficking cases [in Colombia] are carried out with complete impunity.”*

**Source:** “Trata de personas en Colombia (Human Trafficking in Colombia),” *El Colombiano*, 31 January 2017. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/trata-de-personas-sin-doliente-en-colombia-AN5843604>

*Human trafficking in Colombia remains an issue despite steps authorities have taken to thwart this activity. According to this source, 99% of human trafficking cases are carried out with complete impunity. Furthermore, each victim is initially sold for \$(USD) 4,000, but once in their destination country, are sold for as much as \$(USD) 40,000. Girls trafficked are most commonly sent to China, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, and the United Arab Emirates...*

**Source:** “Colombia es origen, tránsito y destino de trata de personas (Colombia is an Origin, Transit and Destination Source for Human Trafficking Victims),” *El Tiempo*, 17 January 2017. <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/trata-de-personas-en-colombia/16791863>

*Those departments within Colombia with the highest numbers of reported human trafficking cases include Valle del Cauca, Antioquia, Risaralda, Quindío, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Córdoba and Nariño. Of these departments, six are located in what is known as the “coffee region” of Colombia. This idea is evidenced by the 2012 arrested of multiple members of Las Paisitas gang. This group was dedicated to recruiting young girls from the coffee region by offering them modeling contracts, fame, and fortune. Once recruited, they would be taken to Bogota and forced into sex slavery or sent to other locations.*

**Source:** “Colombia y Ecuador buscan prevenir trata personas en feria binacional (Colombia and Ecuador Look for Ways to Prevent Human Trafficking),” *El Heraldo*, 15 September 2016. <https://www.elheraldo.co/nacional/colombia-y-ecuador-buscan-prevenir-trata-personas-en-feria-binacional-285314>

*Every year since 2014, Colombia has enacted laws and decrees dedicated to minimizing human trafficking in the country (Law 985 and decrees 1069 and 1066). However, NGO’s who work with trafficking victims claim that although the government has attempted to implement new laws, lack of personnel to combat this activity and a relatively small budget dedicated to eradicating human trafficking are minimizing the efforts of the new laws.*

## A Small Box That’s a Big Deal: How Latin American Countries Are Using CubeSATs and Why it Matters

by Kevin Freese

The Army is the Defense Department’s largest space user and the space domain is an essential part of the current and future operational environment. A relatively new satellite technology – the CubeSAT – is now making it easier for countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay to launch their space programs. By facilitating traditionally non-spacefaring nations to develop space programs, CubeSATs will give such nations a greater voice in international space policies and laws. For the United States, this will mean increased necessity to take the interests of other nations into consideration when operating in space.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/SWJ - A Small Box Thats a Big Deal - How Latin American Countries Are Using CubeSATs and Why it Matters.pdf>





## Colombia Acquires New Scientific Research Ship

**OE Watch Commentary:** Colombia uses ships to patrol its rivers and exercise its maritime sovereignty, but much of its fleet is aging. Currently, the government has plans to replace these vessels, but that is not Colombia's only naval concern. The General Maritime Directorate (DIMAR) has also realized the need to overhaul and modernize the Colombian Navy's scientific research vessels. As part of this commitment, Colombian shipbuilding company COTECMAR worked with Spanish company Armon to design a scientific research vessel known as the *ARC Roncador*. The accompanying passages discuss this vessel.

This endeavor is significant because it represents the first new research vessel to be added to the Colombian Navy in 51 years. As the first passage discusses, *ARC Roncador* is replacing the *ARC Quindío* and is unique as the first Colombian ship with dynamic positioning. This means it is able to automatically maintain the vessel's position and direction by using its own propellers and thrusters.

*ARC Roncador* performed its first operation in March 2017 off San Andres Island and the Providencia archipelago where, according to the excerpt from *Infodefensa*, it explored the ocean depths and the geo forms that make up that island chain, to decode its secrets using large multibeam bathymetric survey instruments. The navy also plans to use the vessel to support the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History to search for ancient artifacts in the Caribbean. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

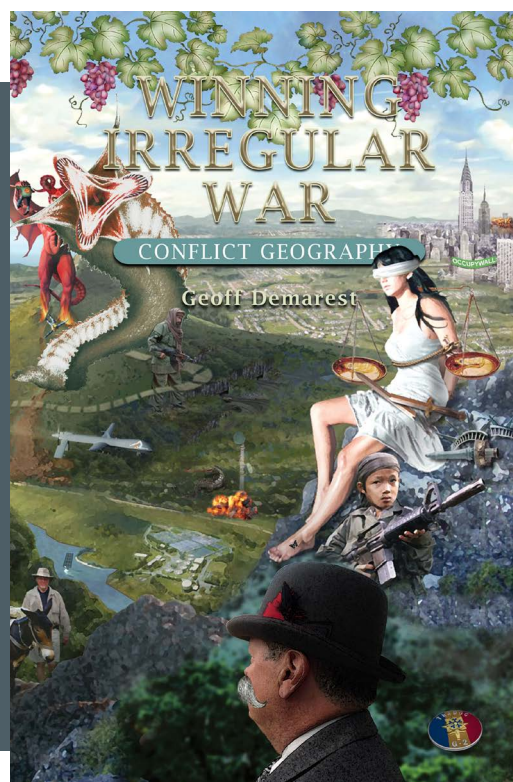
*“The ARC Roncador, Colombia’s most modern multipurpose hydrographic vessel, is in service performing scientific research for the Colombian Navy. The ship...is outfitted with state-of-the-art scientific research equipment for oceanography, hydrography, and marine geology, making it the first Colombian ship with dynamic positioning...”*

**Source:** “Así es el ARC Roncador, nuevo buque hidrografico de la Armada de Colombia (ARC Roncador: The Colombian Navy’s New Hydrographic Vessel),” *Webinfomil*, 28 December 2016. <http://www.webinfomil.com/2016/08/asi-es-el-arc-roncador-nuevo-buque.html>

*The ARC Roncador, Colombia’s most modern multipurpose hydrographic vessel, is in service performing scientific research for the Colombian Navy. The ship, named after an island in the San Andrés and Providencia archipelago, “is outfitted with state-of-the-art scientific research equipment for oceanography, hydrography, and marine geology, making it the first Colombian ship with dynamic positioning,” according to a Colombian press release.*

**Source:** La Armada de Colombia incorpora un buque fabricado por Armon y Cotecmar (Colombian Navy Commissions Vessel Built by Armon and Cotecmar),” *Infodefensa*, 27 January 2017. <http://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2017/01/27/noticia-colombia-armada-colombiana-incorpora-nuevo-buque-oceanografico.html>

*Using ARC Roncador’s unique capabilities, “we will be able to send down devices to sample the water at the bottom of the ocean to a depth of 4,000 meters. If filming is needed, we can send ROVs and reveal the ocean’s secrets through video images and photography. And we can deploy scientific equipment on board, which can do on-site analysis and reveal the samples we’re studying,” Cmdr. León detailed. The ship will also participate “in a series of missions that are going to be carried out this year with various research centers, the highlight being the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve project, which is an expedition to each of the islands that will be done during the month of September, near Isla de Serranilla.”*



**Geoff Demarest’s *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just ‘insurgency.’ In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest raises new and overlooked concepts related to modern conflict in a provocative manner designed to stir up debate and critical thinking. As Geoff Demarest puts it: “I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious.”**

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Winning%20Irregular%20War/WlrW\\_16April2017%20Cover%20V4.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Winning%20Irregular%20War/WlrW_16April2017%20Cover%20V4.pdf)



## Costa Rica and Narcotics Trade

**OE Watch Commentary:** “There is no beach in Costa Rica that has not been touched by drug trafficking and cocaine coming from Colombia.” As the first accompanying excerpt discusses, this statement was made by Gustavo Mata Vega, Minister of Security, in a hearing that took place on 16 February before the deputies of the Security and Drug Trafficking Commission of the Legislative Assembly. During this hearing, Mata Vega gave an exhibition to the legislators where he showed a map provided by Colombian intelligence agencies, showing the traces made by drug ships from that country. He further added that Colombia is projecting that traffickers will produce 2,000 tons of cocaine in 2017, much of which is expected to pass through Costa Rica.

As the second passage discusses, Mata Vega also indicated that Costa Rica is experiencing a large influx of marijuana from Jamaica. Apparently there is so much cocaine in the country that a ton of Jamaican marijuana is paid with 40 kilos of coca and weapons by Costa Rican criminal organizations. To combat this new issue of marijuana/cocaine exchange, Costa Rica will be adding coastal radars and new equipment to help detect maritime activity. Furthermore, two boats will start conducting patrols later this year, each of which have the capacity to accommodate 25 sailors and stay at sea for a month. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** “El narcotráfico arrebató el tradicional clima de paz a Costa Rica (Drug Trafficking Destroys Peace in Costa Rica),” *Diario Las Americas*, 26 December 2016. <http://www.diariolasamericas.com/america-latina/el-narcotrafico-arrebata-el-tradicional-clima-paz-costa-rica-n4110513>

*It [2016] has been a particularly difficult year for Costa Rica. We underwent situations that have never occurred in the country. In fact, at this point there is no beach in which cocaine from Colombia has not touched, according to Public Security Minister Gustavo Mata. Mata further elaborated that 2016 was a record year for homicides in the country and that the principal cause of this violence is an increase in drug trafficking activities as Costa Rica now serves as a transit and storage country for shipments arriving from South America.*

**Source:** “Narcos de Costa Rica usan coca y armas como moneda (Narcos Use Cocaine and Weapons as Cash Substitute),” *La Nacion*, 07 March 2017. [http://www.nacion.com/sucesos/seguridad/Narcos-ticos-usan-armas-modena\\_0\\_1620037994.html](http://www.nacion.com/sucesos/seguridad/Narcos-ticos-usan-armas-modena_0_1620037994.html)

*Since 2014 Costa Rica has been receiving increased shipments of marijuana from Jamaica, however, this is not what is concerning. What is noteworthy is that drug trafficking organizations are paying for the marijuana with cocaine and weapons instead of cash. This activity was first noted by the Costa Rican Coast Guard last year after they confiscated a boat loaded with one metric ton of marijuana and 20 kilograms of cocaine.*

## China and Cuba Strengthen Military Ties

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 28 March, Cuba’s Armed Forces Minister General Leopoldo Cintra Frías, and Deputy Chairman of China’s Central Military Commission General Fan Changlong met in Beijing and agreed to strengthen military cooperation between the two countries. The accompanying passages discuss this meeting and Chinese-Cuban military ties.

As the first passage notes, Fan highlighted the importance that China attaches to the development of friendly relations and cooperation with the Cuban armed forces and noted that they will continue to support the military restructuring of Cuba. He added that China will “promote the overall development of army-to-army exchanges and cooperation with Cuba.”

At present, Cuba’s armed forces rely heavily on old Soviet-era equipment, much of it in need of repair and spare parts. As indicated in the second excerpt, the Chinese military has similar hardware, so some of the proposed military-to-military cooperation may involve updating some of this equipment. As for the Chinese, their promises have been quite vague, but as the third passage notes, they promise “to support the development of the Cuban Armed Forces through personnel exchange and training.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** “Cuba y China fortalecen sus relaciones militares (China and Cuba Strengthen Military Ties),” *Defensa*, 31 March 2017. <http://www.defensa.com/centro-america/cuba-china-fortalecen-relaciones-militares>

*“China is ready to work with Cuba to implement a consensus on deepening bilateral cooperation reached by the leaders of the two countries and to promote the further development of China-Cuba relations,” Fan Changlong was quoted as saying. Fan said that China attaches great importance to the development of friendly relations and cooperation with the Cuban armed forces and will continue to support the military restructuring of Cuba. He added that China will promote the overall development of army-to-army exchanges and cooperation with Cuba.*

**Source:** “Cuban defense chief goes to China ‘to strengthen ties,’” *Progreso Weekly*, 28 March 2017. <http://progresoweekly.us/cuban-defense-chief-goes-china-strengthen-ties/>

*According to the Beijing-based website China Military Online and as cited in Progreso Weekly, “Cuba’s armed forces rely heavily on old Soviet-era equipment, much of it in need of repair and spare parts. The Chinese military has similar hardware and Cuba is looking to Beijing for assistance in maintaining its defense capabilities.”*

**Source:** “China espera aumentar relaciones militares con Cuba con la visita de ministro (China Hopes to Strengthen Military Relations with Cuba),” *La Vanguardia*, 30 March 2017. <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170330/421317303839/china-espera-aumentar-relaciones-militares-con-cuba-con-la-visita-de-ministro.html>

*“We are always ready to support the development of the Cuban Armed Forces through personnel exchange and training. Furthermore, we are interested in uniting forces with Cuba to build a stronger relationship”, according to Chinese Defense Minister Wu Qian.*





## Brazilian Army Expands Armored Vehicle Fleet

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages discuss the modern Brazilian fleet of armed vehicles known as the VBTP-MR 6x6, and the country's plans to expand its inventory of them. According to the passages, the VBTP-MR 6x6 is currently the most advanced armored vehicle being produced in South America and is also the first Brazilian-made armored vehicle with anti-mine protection. With this vehicle fleet, Brazil is once again leading the way in indigenous military equipment (with the help of Italian-based company Iveco) and has already received orders from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador to purchase this equipment.

In 2013, the Brazilian Military implemented the "Guarani Program" to develop and procure the VBTP-MR 6x6. The vehicle was designed for soldier transport, meaning that its function is to deploy troops in patrol missions, as well as in armed combat situations. Furthermore, as the first passage notes, it can be equipped with different weapons systems.

In 2017, Brazil is expected to receive an additional 60 VBTP-MR 6x6 vehicles bringing the total number of operating units in the country to 238. By 2038, this number will increase to 1,580. As indicated in the third excerpt, the Brazilian military also expects to receive 50 weapon stations for 7.62mm and 12.7mm machine guns in 2017. By 2020, 215 weapon stations are expected to be procured.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** "VBTP-MR," *Military-Today*, 30 March 2017. [http://www.military-today.com/apc/vbtp\\_mr.htm](http://www.military-today.com/apc/vbtp_mr.htm)

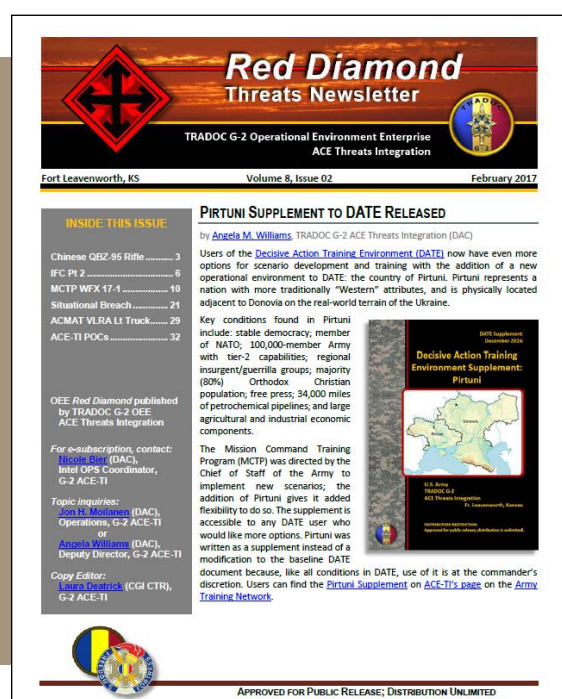
*A armor of the VBTP-MR provides protection against small arms fire and artillery shell splinters. The vehicle can be fitted with add-on composite armor for improved protection. This armored personnel carrier has a V-shaped hull, which provides protection against landmines. The interior is fitted with a spall liner. Several options of weapons are proposed for this armored personnel carrier. It might be fitted with remotely controlled 7.62-mm, 12.7-mm machine guns or 40-mm automatic grenade launcher. Variant with 30-mm cannon and anti-tank guided missiles has also been proposed. The vehicle has a crew of two and is designed to transport 9 troops. Troops enter and leave the vehicle via the rear doors or roof hatches. The VBTP-MR is fitted with modern battlefield management systems, which is used for navigation, positioning, and mission planning. It also displays nearby friendly units.*

**Source:** "VBTP-MR GUARANI. O futuro da mobilidade do exército brasileiro (VBTP-MR GUARANI. The Future of the Brazilian Military's Mobility)," *Brasil Em Defesa*, 9 February 2013. <http://www.brasilemdefesa.com/vbtp-mr-guarani-o-futuro-da-mobilidade.html>

*The Guarani is the first Brazilian-made armored vehicle with anti-mine protection. Its floor was built to withstand up to 13 pounds of explosives. If it is hit with a blast of such magnitude, the vehicle will be blown off the ground, but its occupants will not be at serious risk, according to tests done by EB (acronym for Brazilian military) engineers in the Guarani's approval stage, when mannequins were used in place of soldiers. The Guarani's frame is also protected by steel that can withstand 7.62 mm rifle rounds. It also can be fitted with additional shielding against anti-air machine gun projectiles.*

**Source:** "Ejército brasileño actualiza la flota de blindados (Brazilian Army Upgrades Armored Vehicle Fleet)," *Dialogo Americas*, 03 April 2017. <https://dialogo-americas.com/es/articles/brazilian-army-upgrades-armored-vehicle-fleet>

*The Brazilian military expects to receive 50 weapon stations for 7.62mm- and 12.7mm-machine guns in 2017. This equipment is attached to the vehicles, and it has remote-controlled automatic firing. It also has a computerized aiming and firing control system, as well as day- and night-vision cameras that provide precision firing.*



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# A “First” for the People’s Liberation Army: A Navy Admiral Becomes a Joint, Regional, Commander

by Dennis J. Blasko

Republished in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation’s China Brief, Vol.17, Issue 5, dated 31 March 2017, Edited for OE Watch.  
For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/first-peoples-liberation-army-navy-admiral-becomes-joint-regional-commander/>

**OE Watch Commentary:** Among recent changes in the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) leadership, the appointment of Vice Admiral Yuan Yubai to Commander of the Southern Theater Command is particularly noteworthy. Yuan is the first and only non-Army officer ever to command a Military Region (MR) or Theater Command (TC), one of the five newly formed joint headquarters that replaced the seven Military Regions that had existed since the mid-1980s. Consistent with Chinese practice, Yuan shares responsibility for the Theater with a political commissar, Army General Wei Liang. Nonetheless, Admiral Yuan’s selection as TC commander is a major event in PLA history, and a step toward abandoning the traditional Chinese mentality that land outweighs sea. The accompanying passages discuss this change and its implications.

Unlike the old Military Regions, which were staffed primarily by Army personnel and in peacetime directly commanded Army units in their areas of operation, the five new Theater Commands are joint headquarters composed of personnel from all services. TCs are responsible for operations (战区主战), which includes “responding to security threats in their strategic directions, maintaining peace, deterring wars and winning battles,” as noted in the second accompanying passage.

Vice Admiral Yuan’s selection to become commander of the Southern Theater Command is truly a historic development for the PLA. During this round of reform, as the Army is reduced in size and the other services increased to better balance the distribution of forces, Yuan’s assignment as TC commander is another major step in breaking the “big army’s” influence, as the third passage points out. It is likely only a matter of time before an Air Force general or another Navy admiral is assigned to command another coastal Theater or perhaps even the Central Theater Command.

At 60 years of age, Vice Admiral Yuan is the same age as his American contemporary, Admiral Harry Harris, Jr., commander of the US Pacific Command. Yuan joined the PLA Navy in 1976 and trained at the Qingdao Submarine Academy, located in the North Sea Fleet (NSF) area of responsibility. Afterward, he was assigned as a submarine crew member in Qingdao. In 1982, he served as the base torpedo chief and then executive officer on a submarine, most likely a nuclear attack Han-class submarine. In 1990, he became a submarine captain and apparently stayed in that position until 2003 when he was promoted to chief of staff of the 1st Submarine Base at Qingdao. Four years later he became base commander, followed by assignments as NSF chief of staff in 2010 and NSF commander and concurrent Jinan MR deputy commander in 2014. He was promoted to rear admiral in 2008 and vice admiral in 2015. **End OE Watch Commentary (Blasko)**

*“After the new military services system is established, the reshuffled Theater Commands system can shake off the former ‘big army’ style and build the joint operational commanding institutions that are more suitable for modern warfare.”*

**Source:** “China’s three naval fleets have new commanders,” *Chinamil*, 22 January 2017. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-01/23/content\\_7464479.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-01/23/content_7464479.htm)

*“Vice Admiral Yuan Yubai, former commander of the North China Sea Fleet, was promoted commander of the Southern Theater Command...”*

...

*“The personnel reshuffle in the Navy showed a distinct feature that theater-level leaders are appointed across regions. [...] This reshuffle also reflected that high-level leaders are transferred at shorter intervals.”*

**Source:** “President Xi announces establishment of five PLA theater commands,” *Chinamil*, 1 February 2017. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-02/01/content\\_6884069.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-02/01/content_6884069.htm)

*“Xi pointed out that the theater commands are responsible for such missions as responding to security threats in their strategic directions, maintaining peace, deterring wars and winning battles, and will play significant roles in safeguarding the overall situations concerning the national security strategy and the military strategy.”*

**Source:** “Considerations for replacing Military Area Commands with Theater Commands,” *Chinamil*, 3 February 2017. [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/2016-02/03/content\\_6888462.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/2016-02/03/content_6888462.htm)

*“After the new military services system is established, the reshuffled Theater Commands system can shake off the former ‘big army’ style and build the joint operational commanding institutions that are more suitable for modern warfare.”*





# The Evolution of the PLA's Red-Blue Exercises

by David C. Logan

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/evolution-plas-red-blue-exercises/>

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the summer of 2016, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) completed the most recent round of its "Stride" (跨区) exercises, a series of large-scale military training exercises that prominently feature simulated opposing force confrontations. These exercises provide indicators of the capabilities and threat perceptions of the PLA. In addition, the 2016 Stride exercises featured a number of changes to improve the realism of the exercises. The accompanying passages point out some important aspects of these exercises.

In the US and other Western countries, the "Red" force typically represents the adversary, but in China, the designations are reversed, with "Red" units representing the PLA and "Blue" units representing the opposing force. Despite the potential of Red-Blue exercises, the PLA has failed to fully exploit them. Past exercises were overly scripted and designed more to bolster the reputation of the participating troops rather than improve their operational readiness. In recent years, however, the PLA has attempted to expand, systematize, and professionalize the use of Red-Blue exercises.

For example, as the first accompanying passage demonstrates, in the Stride exercises, reports have highlighted the success of a First Group Army armored brigade during an annual exercise which includes "a military scenario countering Taiwanese independence," noting that they "successfully penetrated the Blue Forces' central base..." The reference to Taiwan suggests that perhaps confrontation exercises are conducted with an eye to a future contingency involving Taiwan.

As the second passage notes, one Red Force unit from the Southern Theater Command struggled with intense electromagnetic interference in an effort to simulate a more realistic battlefield, especially conditions of challenging electronic warfare. The 2016 Stride exercises featured a number of other changes to improve the realism of the exercises. While participants in previous Stride exercises were recommended by superior command units, last year's participants were chosen at random from the Army units of each of the Theater Commands. In the past, Red Forces were only assigned offensive roles, but last year were responsible for both offense and defense. More of the exercise was conducted at night and there was a deliberate attempt to incorporate the use of "new type" forces such as "special forces, technological reconnaissance, aerospace reconnaissance, and electromagnetic interference."

The recent reforms to the military's Red-Blue exercises will likely help improve the training and operational capabilities of the PLA, as well as the Chinese military's own understanding of the tactics of potential foreign adversaries. At the same time, the growth and professionalization of the PLA's Red-Blue exercises also provide a valuable source of information about the threat perception and future trajectory of the PLA. The equipment, tactics, and objectives of the participating troops will reveal the kinds of scenarios PLA anticipates are most likely in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Logan)**

*"During the first OPFOR exercise, which annually is responsible for a military scenario countering Taiwanese independence, the 1st Group Army 'an armored brigade'—demonstrated superior combat capability, and successfully penetrated the Blue Forces' central base, ending the exercise"*

**Source:** "朱日和演习首战：对台一线部队攻入蓝军核心阵地 (Zhu and the First Battle: The First Line of Troops into the Blue Army Core Positions)," *Sina.com*, 21 July 2016. <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/china/2016-07-21/doc-ixuhukv7041022.shtml>

*"During the first OPFOR exercise, which annually is responsible for a military scenario countering Taiwanese independence, the 1st Group Army 'an armored brigade'—demonstrated superior combat capability, and successfully penetrated the Blue Forces' central base, ending the exercise..."*

**Source:** Xi Yazhou, "朱日和演习，不是个游戏 (Zhu Rihe Exercise, They Are Not a Game)," *观察者 (The Observer)*, 24 July 2016. [http://www.guancha.cn/XiYaZhou/2016\\_07\\_24\\_368645\\_s.shtml](http://www.guancha.cn/XiYaZhou/2016_07_24_368645_s.shtml).

*"Furthermore, a certain unit in the Southern Theater Command modified its own communications network. It became the only unit to preserve unimpeded communications on Zhu Rihe's 'complex electromagnetic environment' battlefield. Actually their method was to replace their firmware, and install their self-compiled smart router app. Strictly speaking, this network is still at risk, but in the midst of real combat, it is effective."*

*"... a certain unit in the Southern Theater Command ... became the only unit to preserve unimpeded communications on [a] 'complex electromagnetic environment' battlefield."*



## A Russian View on US-North Korean Relations

**OE Watch Commentary:** Escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula have sparked regional concern about the eventual breakout of military conflict over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) swiftly advancing nuclear-missile capabilities. A recent article published in Russia's *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* provides a Russian perspective of the US strategy surrounding the DPRK's nuclear-missile program and suggests possible ways forward in achieving a peaceful, diplomatic solution.

The article demonstrates how Russia interprets the US' consideration of "all options" to the North Korean problem as entailing direct military action, especially when such statements by government officials are paired with the annual large scale training exercises of Key Resolve and Foal Eagle conducted by the US and the Republic of Korea (ROK). This perception was likely reinforced by the reported redirection of the USS Carl Vinson Aircraft Carrier from Australia to the Korean Peninsula in early April.

The accompanying passage claims that the DPRK's acceleration of its nuclear and missile programs is understandable, as they are likely attempting to develop nuclear missile capabilities to a point where the US would deem the risks of any military intervention as "unacceptably high." The author assesses that the behaviors of all powers involved will likely follow the historical pattern of a lack of dialogue, demonstrations of military power, and increased sanctions imposed on the DPRK—a pattern that could result in armed conflict.

The article outlines critical steps for achieving a peaceful solution, which includes a "moratorium on actions causing the other party the greatest concern," recognition of the DPRK's security concerns as legitimate, and pursuing separate negotiations for nuclear and missile programs in phases. The author argues that the success of the Iran deal established a framework for such negotiations and demonstrated that a seemingly unattainable compromise is achievable for all parties involved, despite the differences between the Korean and Iranian cases. **End OE Watch Commentary (Galluzzi)**

*“There is a high probability of the situation developing per the well-known scenario: rejection of dialogue—DPRK missile firings and nuclear tests—new UN Security Council sanctions plus additional sanctions of the United States and its allies. The logical finale of such a scenario could be a broad-based armed conflict with a high degree of likelihood of the employment of weapons of mass destruction right at our borders in the Far East.”*

**Source:** Zhebin, A. Z. “Korean Peninsula Could Become Test-of-Strength Proving Ground for US, PRC,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 6 April 2017. [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_121123\\_43/content/Display/CEL2017040637546981#index=1&searchKey=25881654&rpp=10](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/CEL2017040637546981#index=1&searchKey=25881654&rpp=10)

*It is no secret that the United States has recently been actively discussing the idea of preemptive strikes against facilities of the DPRK's nuclear-missile program. During the recent trip of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to Asian countries it was aired for the first time at the official level, although shrouded in diplomatic words to the effect that the United States is considering “all options” in relation to the DPRK. These options are being intensively rehearsed at the joint American-South Korean military exercises being held off the DPRK's borders.*

...

*It is hardly any wonder that in this situation the North Koreans speeded up their nuclear-missile program. It would appear that Pyongyang is intent on achieving as quickly as possible results which persuade the United States and its allies that the damage from a choice of strong-arm option would prove for them unacceptably high.*

...

*There is a high probability of the situation developing per the well-known scenario: rejection of dialogue—DPRK missile firings and nuclear tests—new UN Security Council sanctions plus additional sanctions of the United States and its allies. The logical finale of such a scenario could be a broad-based armed conflict with a high degree of likelihood of the employment of weapons of mass destruction right at our borders in the Far East.*

...

*Korean matters coming to be at a top place in the American-Chinese dialogue confirms that the peninsula is now one of the most intricate knots of Chinese-American contradictions, and it is not inconceivable that it could become a proving ground for a test of strength between the United States and the PRC.*

...

*Realistic approaches to a settlement of the situation could include:*

- *Recognition by all parties of the expediency of a temporary moratorium on actions causing the other party the greatest concern as a necessary intermediate stage to halt the development of the situation per a negative scenario;*
- *Recognition of the rationality of a separate solution of the missile and nuclear problems... and of the DPRK's legitimate security concerns, [consenting] to discuss and settle the issues involved here in phased fashion*

*On the whole, just as structurally and chronologically devised a deal as was struck with Iran is needed to settle the Korean problem. Granted all the differences between the Korean and Iranian cases, the main lesson of the Iranian deal for Korea is that compromise, which, owing to the practically opposite positions of the United States and Iran, originally seemed unattainable, in the end, given the political will, patient diplomacy, and, at times, “compulsion to peace” of the principal disputants by the other participants in the negotiations, proved achievable.*





## China's Plan to Develop its Strategic Emerging Industries: Tap into Private Investors

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Chinese government used to guard certain technologies from the private sector, but as the accompanying article discusses, it is now opening up more industries to private investors. These include the strategic industries of oil drilling and defense technology, the latter of which is also considered an emerging industry. The reasons given for the opening up are to “boost development efficiency and stimulate investment growth.”

According to the State Council of the People's Republic of China's official website, strategic emerging industries accounted for about 8% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015. By allowing the private sector a wider access to these industries, China hopes to help meet its goal of increasing the output of strategic emerging industries to 15% GDP by 2020. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“Widening access for private capital to enter these industries, together with improved regulation, will both boost development efficiency and stimulate private investment growth.”*

**Source:** “More Sectors to Open Up for Private Investment,” *Xinhua*, 10 April 2017. [http://english.gov.cn/news/top\\_news/2017/04/10/content\\_281475622160710.htm](http://english.gov.cn/news/top_news/2017/04/10/content_281475622160710.htm)

### **More Sectors to Open Up for Private Investment**

*China will open up more industries, including oil drilling and defense technology, to private investors to cope with slowing private investment growth, Xinhua-run Economic Information Daily reported Monday....*

*“Widening access for private capital to enter these industries, together with improved regulation, will both boost development efficiency and stimulate private investment growth,” Li [“Widening access for private capital to enter these industries, together with improved regulation, will both boost development efficiency and stimulate private investment growth,” Li [Wei, head of the Development Research Center of the State Council] said.*

*Growth in private investment slowed to 3.2 percent year on year in 2016, 6.9 percentage points lower than in 2015, due to poor performance in manufacturing, service and mining sectors, as well as continued price decline of investment in fixed assets. But the downward trend was reversed after the government moved to spur growth, with private investment recording growth of 6.7 percent in the first two months of the year.*

*China aims to increase output of strategic emerging industries to account for 15 percent of GDP by 2020.*

## Potential for Lone-Wolf Attacks on the Rise in Southeast Asia

**OE Watch Commentary:** Asian news sources are expressing concern over a potential rise in lone-wolf terror attacks in Southeast Asian countries. This is due to the fact that, as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) loses ground in Syria and Iraq, some Southeast Asian fighters are returning to their home countries. The accompanying excerpt discusses this concern.

The article quotes Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay, head of counter-terrorism for Malaysia's Special Branch, who says that as it becomes more difficult for ISIS followers to go to Syria, “We are now seeing more and more lone-wolf attacks as IS has called for its followers to launch attacks in their home countries if they cannot make it to Syria.”

Concern over ISIS carrying out attacks is not limited to Southeast Asia. As the article points out, the more ISIS loses its footing over Syria and Iraq, the more members could be driven back to their original countries “everywhere in the world,” where they might plan further attacks. (Also see: “Can ISIS Gain a Stronghold in the Philippines?” *OE Watch*, March 2017.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“IS has called for its followers to carry out attacks everywhere in the world. This will include their home countries after they return home...”*

**Source:** Amy Chew, “Threats of Lone-wolf Attacks Rising in Southeast Asia,” *Channel News Asia*, 10 April 2017. <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/threats-of-lone-wolf-attacks-rising-in-southeast-asia/3641922.html>

### **Threats of Lone-wolf Attacks Rising in Southeast Asia**

*The key factor in the heightened risk is that Islamic State (IS) is losing ground in Syria and Iraq, which is resulting in some Southeast Asian fighters returning to their home countries. At the same time, extremists in this region tempted to travel to the Middle East to go and fight for IS are finding it harder to do so, forcing them to look closer to home to carry out attacks.*

*“It is very difficult now for IS followers to go to Syria. We are now seeing more and more lone-wolf attacks as IS has called for its followers to launch attacks in their home countries if they cannot make it to Syria,” Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay, head of counter-terrorism for Malaysia's Special Branch, told Channel NewsAsia.*

*“... members of IS are no longer capable of protecting their families and wives over there (in Syria),” said Nasir Abas, former leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, the group behind the devastating 2002 Bali bombings.*

*“IS has called for its followers to carry out attacks everywhere in the world. This will include their home countries after they return home,” said Nasir.*



## Strategic Issues China Faces in Military Informatization

**OE Watch Commentary:** The topic of information warfare in China can be traced to the mid-1980s book *Information Warfare* by Shen Weiguang. However, detailed discussion and analysis of the topic did not take root until the 1991 Gulf War. While China has been analyzing the topic and striving to enhance its combat power through informatization, there are still significant challenges, as the accompanying article discusses.

The Chinese military has made great progress in pursuing informationization. However, it still falls behind more advanced countries in technology and user capability. One of the key issues is that there is a discrepancy between the actual technology, which the article describes as “having become highly technology intensive” and the country’s military requirements in its combat units, which the article describes as still “at a rather low level.” Another issue is that China does not effectively match technological know-how with technological capability. According to the article, “some people with technology know-how remain in academies and do not know about the actual requirements in combat forces, while people working on the frontlines of military operations are short of technological capability.”

The key, according to the authors, is not to start with the development and implementation of the technology, but rather to first study the requirement at the command and control level. What are the tactical and operational requirements? Of course, this could prove to be challenging as China has had no real combat experience over the past three and a half decades. According to the authors, “the evolution of war has now entered the stage of informatized warfare. War demands are driving the unceasing and continuous upgrading for informatization.” That being the case, China might continue to struggle to maintain pace with other, more experienced countries until it gains more experience itself. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“The purpose of understanding informatization is... to take aim at actual operations and to... defeat opponents.”*



The emblem of People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3APLASSF.svg>, public domain.

**Source:** Ni Xin and Li Xin, “军事信息化建设的战略问题 (Strategic Issues in Military Informatization),” *Xuexi Shibao*, 29 March 2017. <http://www.studytimes.cn/ZYDX/JSJGF/2017-03-29/8840.html>

### ***Strategic Issues in Military Informatization***

*The evolution of war has now entered the stage of informatized warfare. War demands are driving the unceasing and continuous upgrading of informatization. In particular, our military's informatization has not yet been completed and is facing a greater competition pressure. The process of informatization per se is developing at accelerating speed. On one hand, information technology is continuously developing in the direction of getting more and more smarter, being directly related to war, and gaining greater value in making contributions to winning wars... As things stand in our military's informatization drive, we are urgently in need of making strategic adjustments on the basis of war thinking, and should carefully consider how to advance the process of informatization in the context of new technologies, which keep emerging, so as to step up informatization efforts on the basis of the policy and system advantages of civil-military integration.*

*The purpose of understanding informatization is not to “showcase” the advanced features of technologies. The goal is to take aim at actual operations and to serve the purpose of defeating opponents.*

*In the final analysis, our military informatization must not take the path of first determining technology and then merging it into tactics; instead, we should strengthen our technology-related thinking on the basis of reasonably determining the actual operation requirements, do the utmost to improve our technology reserves, and more importantly, orient technological development to the actual needs in military operations, let technology-related thinking serve operations-related thinking, thus truly turning informatization into an effective means of winning in war.*





## An Insightful Indian Analysis on China's Warfare Strategies

**OE Watch Commentary:** Due to tensions resulting from decades of border disputes, India has long kept a close eye on neighboring China, studying every aspect of its military operational capability. In one such study, the author argues that, along with expanding its military globally, China's focus has shifted from the tactical to the operational level of war. The accompanying excerpts describe some key points made in this insightful analysis.

First, China is hoping to replace the United States as the leading power, while downplaying its military might, "which is little match to the United States." It plans to do this through the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, which has two components. As the article discusses, the land component called the "Silk Road Economic Belt" would run across the Eurasian landmass, while the sea component called the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" would straddle across the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean region.

Next, the breakdown of China's four headquarters under the Central Military Command (CMC) into 15 departments implies that China needed to streamline its previous departments for more focused results and monitoring. It also needed new players, which were not needed before since "the PLA's roles and missions were limited to continental defense."

Regarding technological advancements, the author points out that China is striving to develop its space, electromagnetic, and cyber capability rather than focusing on building up its capability in land, air, and sea. Due to the United States military's supremacy in land, air, and sea since World War II, and given the huge disparity between the two countries' defense spending, China likely does not feel it can catch up in the foreseeable future.

In a discussion about transparency, the author points out that, along with increasing its military's global roles, the country has become more transparent since 2008 by setting up an official spokesperson system in the Ministry of National Defense. He goes on to explain that a PLA officer had told him that it is no longer possible to hide capabilities in modern times, so "it is best to hide intentions."

Finally, wars are fought on three levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. China is focused on optimizing its operational level of war, which, as the author explains, is where the outcome of war is decided. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*"China believes that by making strides in the new battlefields, it stands a better chance of challenging US' military supremacy — through asymmetric, non-contact, and psychological warfare."*

**Source:** Pravin Sawhney, "Chinese Warfare Strategy," *Force Online*, 1 April 2017. <http://www.forceindia.net/ChineseWarfareStrategy.aspx>

*In a unique approach to replace the US as the leading power, China has decided to play on its economic strength, while downplaying its military might which is little match to the US. This it hopes to do through the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) which has two components. The land component called the Silk Road Economic Belt would run across Eurasian landmass, while the sea component called the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road would straddle across the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean region criss-crossing Asia, Africa and Europe through a network of roads, rails, coastal and port infrastructure and oil and gas pipelines, through policy coordination, and unimpeded trade and monetary circulation supported by the China-backed Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) New Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), Silk Route Fund, and so on.*

*The breakdown of four headquarters into 15 departments of the Commission implies two things: one, previous departments which were perhaps unwieldy have been streamlined for more focused results and monitoring. And two, new subjects have been added which were earlier not needed since the PLA's roles and missions were limited to continental defence. For example, the Office for International Military Cooperation has been necessitated by the PLA's new role in support of the OBOR project. The task of this agency is increased military cooperation, counter-terrorism, and so on, between the PLA and security forces of countries on China's OBOR map. Similarly, the Discipline Inspection Commission would ensure zero corruption within the PLA. Officers of this agency would regularly visit command headquarters and field formations to audit disciplinary cases, and submit a report card regularly to the CMC. This would ensure a corruption-free PLA and even more importantly a corruption-free image of the PLA abroad.*

**The Science of War:** *On technology advancement, China has adopted the unique roadmap to focus on the three new battlefields (domains) of the 21st century, namely, space, electromagnetic and cyber, rather than the three traditional ones of land, air and sea. China believes that by making strides in the new battlefields, it stands a better chance of challenging US' military supremacy — through asymmetric, non-contact, and psychological warfare. In the traditional battlefields, the US has been the superpower since the end of World War II, and given the huge disparity between the annual defence allocations (USD 600 billion to China's USD 152 billion) and military-technology base of the two, a catch-up in the foreseeable future is not possible for China.*

*Since the world's focus on China was clearly in two areas of defence and diplomacy, PLA officials rather than foreign service officer took lead in interacting with the world. The reason for this was explained to me by a senior PLA officer. He told me that since in today's world it is not possible to hide capabilities, it is best to hide intentions. And the PLA was best placed to discuss capabilities and national security matters.*



## The Philippines Eyes an End to the NPA Insurgency

**OE Watch Commentary:** While Abu Sayyaf's grisly beheading of a German captive in February 2017 and its other attacks in the Philippines gain much attention, the Philippine security forces still recognize the Communist New People's Army (NPA) as the number one threat in the country. According to the excerpted article in *Philstar* from 6 March, this threat assessment is based on the length of the insurgency, which began in 1968, and the number of people who have died in NPA-related violence, which totals more than 30,000.

The country's National Security Adviser, Hermogenes Esperon Jr., sees an opportunity for peace due to the ideological obsolescence of the NPA. As the article points out, he says that Communist governments have fallen around the world and even China, which is still led by the Communist Party, has opened up to capitalism and foreign markets. He therefore sees a possibility to negotiate an end to the war with the NPA on grounds that a political solution can grow out of the NPA's realization that its original goals are no longer attainable.

The article describes a recent ceasefire, which was concluded in August 2016 but failed due to issues of mistrust, not ideology. The NPA considers its members in prison to be political prisoners and expected the government to release them. When this did not happen the NPA took up arms once again. Philippine President Duterte responded by declaring an all-out war on the NPA and warned Philippine troops to expect an ambush at any moment and not to be complacent given the risk of NPA assassination squads.

Nonetheless, steps towards peace continue, with negotiations taking place in Rome in February 2017. Indeed, it is possible that the Philippine government, like the National Security Advisor, believes that time is on its side and that the NPA may soon recognize this too. A similar case may be seen in Colombia where after several decades of insurgency, a peace with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was concluded in 2016. The NPA, like the FARC, no longer has the legitimacy that Communist ideology afforded it in decades past and is thus experiencing a downturn in recruitment.

What the National Security Advisor seeks, then, according to the article, is to understand what is motivating the remaining several thousand NPA fighters beyond issues such as feudalism and fascism, which he argues are irrelevant today. If this is done, then the final steps to peace can be achieved. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“The problem with these communists is that they are still talking about imperialism when we are no longer a colony. They are talking about feudalism and fascism, when we are not fascists. I think the communists should also update themselves on what they really want.”*

**Source:** “Communists still top security threat – Esperon,” *Philstar*, 6 March 2017. <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/03/06/1678359/communists-still-top-security-threat-esperon>

*The communists are still the country's top security threat, according to National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. Esperon stressed the brand of communism the leftist groups are pushing is an old issue. “The problem with these communists is that they are still talking about imperialism when we are no longer a colony. They are talking about feudalism and fascism, when we are not fascists.” He said even China, which is the leading communist country in the world, has opened up to foreign markets and to the idea of capitalism.*

*Esperon however said that even if communists pose the biggest national security threat, there are political solutions to the problem. Duterte restarted peace talks with the communist rebels that had been on and off for 30 years. The two sides separately declared ceasefires in August, and the informal arrangement largely held as they continued discussions in Rome last month. The communists terminated their self-declared truce after accusing the government of failing to release all political prisoners and encroaching on rebel-held areas. Duterte replied by scuttling the peace talks and declaring an all out war against the communist rebels.*

## China's Concept of Military Strategy By Timothy L. Thomas

China's concept of military strategy is very different from that of the United States. This article examines the various components of the strategic thought of the People's Liberation Army and how its theory of strategy can be applied in contemporary times.

Among other things, the article offers US analysts a template for confronting Chinese strategy.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/China/China's%20Concept%20of%20Military%20Strategy.pdf>







## The Aftermath of the St. Petersburg Metro Bombing

**OE Watch Commentary:** The announcement from Russian authorities that Akbarjon Jalilov, a young man originally from Kyrgyzstan, was the bomber who carried out the attack on the St. Petersburg metro on 3 April brought significant attention to Central Asian migrants living in Russia. The accompanying excerpted articles report on the bombing from Russian and Kyrgyz perspectives, and shed light on an issue that will likely shape the aftermath of the attack.

The article from Russian *Kommersant* shows how Russian media reported Jalilov as a native of Kyrgyzstan who had Russian citizenship and was “allegedly involved with the Islamic State.” Russian officials have been investigating whether or not he had traveled to Syria and the article reports that there are “around 2 thousand people from Kyrgyzstan in the ranks of [the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] ISIS,” though this has been previously reported as a high estimate.

There was increased attention on Central Asians in Russia even before the attack. There have been a number of reports about the recruiting efforts of ISIS in Russia in addition to attention on Central Asians following terrorist attacks in Istanbul, Turkey, including the assault on Atatürk International Airport and the New Year’s Eve shooting at a nightclub. The truck attack in Sweden which took place a few days after the bombing, and which was allegedly conducted by an Uzbek, likely also contributed to the increased attention.

The article from Kyrgyz source *Kloop* reports that “Six people were arrested in St. Petersburg on suspicion of recruiting people for the terrorist organizations ‘Jabhat al-Nusra,’ the Islamic State and others” and that these groups targeted Central Asians. The article also includes a quote from the head of a diaspora group that “document checks of migrants from Kyrgyzstan have become more frequent.” This is worth noting alongside the statement from Kyrgyzstan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs which “refutes the information that Akbarjon Jalilov is ‘a citizen of Kyrgyzstan’” and notes that “he permanently lived in Russia.” While Kyrgyz government officials were quick to cooperate with their Russian counterparts on the investigation, these statements suggest that they are also trying to put some distance on any connection with Jalilov.

Lastly, the article from the Central Asian news source *Fergana News* discusses a statement from Alexander Bortnikov, the head of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) on how “the backbone of terrorist groups is made up of citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), who arrive in Russia in waves of labor migration.” Ultimately, Central Asians in Russia (Russian citizens or migrant workers) are likely to come under increased scrutiny, and the implications of this will shape the aftermath of the attack. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic refutes the information that Akbarjon Jalilov is ‘a citizen of Kyrgyzstan.’”*

**Source:** Sergeiye, Nikolai. “Смертника выдала голова (The suicide bomber gave up a head),” *Kommersant*, 4 April 2017. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3261557>

*The attack in the metro of St. Petersburg, which killed 14 people and wounded about 50 others, was the action of a lone suicide bomber. According to the Investigative Committee of Russia, it was carried out by a 22 year old native of Kyrgyzstan Akbarjon Jalilov, who had Russian citizenship and was allegedly involved with the Islamic State...There are now around 2 thousand people from Kyrgyzstan in the ranks of ISIS, almost twice as many, for example, as those from Dagestan...*

**Source:** Isayeva, Begimay. “Петербург: Шесть человек задержали по подозрению в содействии терроризму (St. Petersburg: Six people have been arrested on suspicion of facilitating terrorism),” *Kloop*, 5 April 2017. <https://kloop.kg/blog/2017/04/05/peterburg-shest-chelovek-zaderzhali-po-podozreniyu-v-sodejstvii-terrorizmu/>

*...Six people were arrested in St. Petersburg on suspicion of recruiting people for the terrorist organizations ‘Jabhat al-Nusra,’ the Islamic State and others. According to the investigation, since 2015 the detainees recruited mostly natives of Central Asia, who came to Russia for work...Against the backdrop of the terrorist attack in St. Petersburg, document checks of migrants from Kyrgyzstan have become more frequent. ‘Most of them with the correct documents will be fine, but they are still worried...’ said the head of Kyrgyz diaspora in St. Petersburg Kochkorbai Kutunayev...*

**Source:** “МИД КР: Акбаржон Джалилов не получал паспорт гражданина Кыргызстана (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Akbarjon Jalilov did not received a passport as a citizen of Kyrgyzstan),” *Zanoza.kg*, 4 April 2017. [http://zanoza.kg/doc/355221\\_mid\\_kr:\\_akbarjon\\_djalilov\\_ne\\_polychal\\_pasport\\_grajdanina\\_kyrgyzstana.html](http://zanoza.kg/doc/355221_mid_kr:_akbarjon_djalilov_ne_polychal_pasport_grajdanina_kyrgyzstana.html)

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic refutes the information that Akbarjon Jalilov is ‘a citizen of Kyrgyzstan.’...The Ministry claims that Jalilov never received a passport as a citizen of Kyrgyzstan, because at the age of 16 in 2011, he received a passport of the Russian Federation as part of his application and petition of his father, a Russian citizen. From this time period until now, he permanently lived in Russia...*

**Source:** “Россия: Глава ФСБ назвал трудовых мигрантов из стран СНГ «костяком террористических групп» в России (Russia: the head of the FSB named migrant workers from the CIS states ‘The backbone of terrorist groups’ in Russia),” *Fergana*, 11 April 2017. <http://www.fergananews.com/news/26256>

*...Alexander Bortnikov said on April 11, ‘The results of an analysis of existing information testify that the backbone of terrorist groups is made up of citizens of the CIS, who arrive in Russia in waves of labor migration.’*



## The Russian-South Ossetian Military Merger

**OE Watch Commentary:** The self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia has maintained its small army since the end of the August 2008 Russian-Georgian War, in addition to the Russian units garrisoned at Tskhinvali. As the accompanying excerpted articles report, the South Ossetian government recently finalized an agreement that would merge some of its Armed Forces into Russia's and there are a couple of things in the articles that provide insight into how this will take place.

The agreement had been under consideration for over a year and one of the issues that reportedly held it up is noted in the *Civil Georgia* article by the breakaway republic's leader, Leonid Tibilov. Tibilov said that "Only [individual] servicemen and not units will enter the Russian army" as there had been a concern that all of South Ossetia's forces would be absorbed into Russia's. Tibilov estimates that "100-150" soldiers will pass selection and that any who do not, "will remain in their own units."

The article from *Svobodnaya Pressa* includes a brief description of the forces in South Ossetia, both indigenous and Russian. It notes that South Ossetia has "two rifle battalions," "motorized rifle and reconnaissance battalions" as well as "two spetsnaz companies." There have been discussions in other media that Russia will simply recruit the most capable South Ossetian soldiers, who may end up serving in another military district and not in South Ossetia. Service in the Russian Armed Forces could open up the path to Russian citizenship, but as the article notes, all members of the South Ossetian forces are already "in possession of Russian citizenship." The article mentions that Russia has "eight battalions" deployed in the region. This certainly provides a deterrence, but if the South Ossetians are looking to maintain a "...small, but maneuverable army," the number of qualified soldiers who leave for the Russian Armed Forces will be an important factor. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*"It is important that the servicemen who will not pass the selection [in the Russian Army], will remain in their own [South Ossetian] units."*



South Ossetian forces in Tskhinvali in May, 2009.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASouth\\_Ossetia\\_parade.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASouth_Ossetia_parade.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0.

**Source:** "Moscow, Tskhinvali Ink Military Agreement," *Civil Georgia*, 3 April 2017. <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29986>

*Moscow and Tskhinvali signed a new defense agreement on March 31 "On the Order of Inclusion of Certain Units of the Armed Forces", "formalizing the merger of the region's military units into the Russian armed forces."... "Moscow will admit the South Ossetian army personnel, who are in possession of Russian citizenship, for military service at the Russian military base in breakaway South Ossetia. "At the same time, they will be eligible for all the guarantees and benefits provided to the Russian servicemen..."*

*According to the agreement, the South Ossetian army will be integrated into the Russian military command structure in two ways: some detachments will join the Russian military base, while the remaining forces will be reduced by a corresponding number of servicemen and the figure, as well as "the tasks and the structure," will have to be agreed with the Russian Federation.... Leonid Tibilov spoke on the matter a day earlier as well. In his interview with Russian daily Kommersant, the South Ossetian leader, ... remembers his meeting with Vladimir Putin in March 2016 and noted that he saw "full understanding" in the Russian President "that South Ossetia should have its own, albeit small, but maneuverable army."...Tibilov stated that the document does not entail the incorporation of the "whole units" of the region's army. "Only [individual] servicemen and not units will enter the Russian army and these servicemen ... will be listed in the Russian units," he explained. "At the initial stage, we are talking about 100-150 soldiers," Tibilov went on. "It is important that the servicemen who will not pass the selection [in the Russian Army], will remain in their own [South Ossetian] units..."*

**Source:** Mardasov, Anton. "Осетинский спецназ пополнит ряды российской армии (Ossetian special forces will reinforce the ranks of the Russian Army)," *Svobodnaya Pressa*, 14 March 2017. <http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/168142/>

*...The armed forces of South Ossetia are made up only of ground forces. They consist of two rifle battalions (200-250 men each), a motorized rifle and reconnaissance battalions, one material and technical support battalion, and two spetsnaz companies. For comparison, in the composition of the 4th military base of the Russian Armed Forces deployed in the territory of the Republic of South Ossetia, there are eight battalions.*





## A Russian Perspective of 21st Century War

**OE Watch Commentary:** *Military Thought* (Военная мысль) prides itself on being the oldest and most influential theoretical publication of the Russian Ministry of Defense. This monthly publication dates from the Tsarist period, and while the title has changed over the decades, it remains the primary Russian “thick journal” where military theory and related topics are discussed. Its editorial board is comprised of senior military academics and leaders from both the Ministry of Defense and General Staff.

The January 2017 issue included an article titled “The Evolution of the Nature and Content of the Concept of ‘War’ in the XXI Century,” by two retired officers, now academics, S. G. Chekinov and S. A. Bogdanov. The authors maintain that despite all the hype over possible new forms of war (i.e. contactless, network-centric, information, hybrid, etc...), the actual essence of war has not changed. They begin by describing how war has been defined in the past, then affirm that this classical definition (“an act of violence, using force upon the enemy to fulfill our will”) remains valid today. The authors then dissect and examine how new concepts of war measure against the classical understanding.

The authors agree that prior to actual armed conflict, an enemy will try to influence the opponent by every sort of non-violent means (e.g. economic, information, diplomatic, intimidation, etc...) but that armed violence has been, is, and will remain the chief characteristic of war—even in the 21st century. Given this assertion, they claim that it is incumbent upon the Russian political and military leadership to develop countermeasures against both these non-violent means, but most importantly, against armed violence, and to “continue to strengthen its security, primarily by improving its military organization.”

While the authors’ description and discussion over the concept and evolution of war merit consideration, their analysis regarding Russia’s probable enemy in the 21st Century prompts concern. They claim that the West, “having already taken a strong commitment to the establishment of their world domination” is determined to become “the global super-society” where it can impose its values and way of life upon others. The authors assert that “Russia will remain the enemy of the West in the ongoing World War of this new type.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** S. G. Chekinov and S. A. Bogdanov, “Эволюция сущности и содержания понятия “война” в XXI столетии (The Evolution of the Nature and Content of the Concept of “War” in the XXI Century),” *Военная мысль*, January 2017. <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/48113925>

*War in human history has always played a huge role in determining the fate of peoples and states. In modern conditions the world is changing rapidly, and is characterized by the weakening, deformation, and fragmentation of the global security system, which has led to the rise of chaos in international relations.... Despite the variety of approaches to defining the essence and content of war, the classical approach to the definition of this term is based on the formulas described by Clausewitz in the XIX century. One of them, the most common, treats war as “an act of violence, using force upon the enemy to fulfill our will.” The other is more specific and more widely known: “War – is not just a political act, but also a true political instrument, a continuation of political relations, conducting them by other means.” At the same time, Clausewitz sees military force as the main driving force of war, and most importantly, different from other [political] means....*

*...In this connection, for several years within the Russian expert community there has been talk about the need to expand the concept of “war.” Some military theorists have pointed to the feasibility of revising the object and the subject of military science. The belief that the subject of military science is war, and its main subject - the armed struggle, in their opinion, no longer corresponds to reality....*

*...In our opinion, it is premature to change the interpretation of the concept of “war.” It always has been, and will always be required to be carried out with the use of certain types of weapons and constitutes an organized armed struggle among peoples, states, alliances, coalitions. Of course, during any war there will be used non-military forms of struggle, especially information - that materially affect the character of the armed struggle. Moreover, the organizational and technical possibilities of their effective implementation have increased dramatically. However, the main characteristic of war is violent action, i.e. the use of armed force....*

*...In the context of the deep and comprehensive social transformations of the XXI century, there have appeared a lot of scientific categories that have no recognized relation with the processes of war and armed conflict.... Very often there are categories for naming these new wars: “traditional warfare”, “non-contact warfare”, “information war”, “network-centric warfare”, “hybrid warfare”, “Cold War”, “environmental war” and others.... In our opinion, all these categories erase the distinction between the true and false understanding of war. When they are used, the concept of “war” soon adopts countless meanings. Most of them disguise the objective reality that the term is intended to reflect. This cannot but cause confusion in social and political relations, and within the problem of inter-state warfare....*

*...It should be noted, that since the end of the Cold War, the West’s struggle against our country has never stopped. It continues and has entered a new stage: they have begun to use elements of “color revolutions.” To the means of the Cold War have been added elements of traditional war, as well as new forms of influence, such as sabotage operations on an enormous scale in the political and economic spheres. Elements of the “color revolutions” have been spread to other regions of the world - the Middle East and the Balkans. There are serious reasons to believe that humanity has already entered a new era of global war, war of a new type....*

*...Currently, the Western countries are integrating into this global super-society, having already taken a strong commitment to the establishment of their world domination....*

*...Although the Western world, which leads the global super-society, has achieved a lot, even more than they expected at the beginning of the Cold War, it cannot rest on its laurels. Therefore, Russia will remain the enemy of the West in the ongoing World War of this new type. The West will calm down only when our country and our people have been relegated to a state worthy of ridicule and contempt....*

*...But no one can win a war, being unarmed. That means we need to arm ourselves, strengthening our national defense, improving the combat capability of the Armed Forces. “Today, we see that some countries are increasingly transforming their policies towards the unlimited, pre-emptive, military actions,” asserts Russian President V. V. Putin. “In this regard, Russia will continue to strengthen its security, primarily by improving its military organization ...”*

## New Special Forces Training Center in Chechnya

**OE Watch Commentary:** As reported a couple months ago (“Chechen MP Battalion in Aleppo: The Russian Perspective,” *OE Watch*, March 2017) a military police unit, comprised mainly of ethnic Chechens, served to help secure the Syrian city of Aleppo. This unit has since returned to Russia. According to an article published in the Russian business news source, *RBK Online*, the Chechen battalion in Syria were trained by “instructors of the International Training Center for Special Purpose Forces from Gudermes,” a new training center located about 25 miles east of the Chechen capital, Grozny. The article describes the background and some of the facilities of this center which is slated to officially open in 2018.

According to the article, this Special Forces training center will be somewhat unique, in that it “is private and is not subordinated to any ministry,” and allegedly funded by “Chechen businessmen who have achieved considerable success in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other parts of the country.” While the author does not specify the exact ownership of this new training facility, it does point out that the “idea of creating the center came to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov about four years ago.”

Once fully operational, this special forces training center will train “servicemen from Rosgvardiya [Russian National Guard], the Defense Ministry, or other security structures” upon a contractual basis. The planned training facilities will include “a military township with an area of over 400 hectares (approx. 1,000 acres) with its own runway, reservoir, and the world’s biggest shooting ranges (4,000 square meters).” Among other training facilities, it will include a pool, gym, a tactical city, a wind tunnel, and parachute complex. The center’s training staff includes “veterans of the elite Alfa and Vypel units,” as well as “veterans of the Armed Forces General Staff Main Directorate (former GRU).”

The article concludes by describing the location and cost of other special forces training facilities around the world, but does not divulge how much the training will cost at the new facility in Chechnya. For centuries, Chechens have had the reputation as fearless and skilled fighters. This new training center will now allow them to share some of their fighting skills with others—but at a market price. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“The structure is private and is not subordinated to any ministry, but Chechen businessmen ‘who have achieved considerable success in business in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other parts of the country’ are investing funds in its construction ‘at their own wish’”*



Chechen Leader, Ramzan Kadyrov.

Source: Kremlin, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47177/photos>, CC by 4.0

**Source:** Inna Sidorkova, “Спецназ готовят в Гудермесе (Spetsnaz Will Train in Gudermes),” *RBK Online*, 17 March 2017. <http://www.rbc.ru/newspaper/2017/03/17/58c6c2ba9a79470d5909cdf6>

*...Instructors of the International Training Center for Special Purpose Forces from Gudermes trained the military police battalion based in Chechnya before its dispatch to Syria in December 2016, RBK was told by Daniil Martynov, head of the center, aide to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov for the security system, and deputy head of the republic’s Rosgvardiya [Federal Service of National Guard Troops] Directorate....*

*...The Gudermes center whose instructors trained the Chechen battalion in Syria is due to open in 2018, Martynov noted. The structure is private and is not subordinated to any ministry, but Chechen businessmen “who have achieved considerable success in business in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other parts of the country” are investing funds in its construction “at their own wish,” Martynov stated.*

*The center will be based at a military township with an area of over 400 hectares with its own runway, reservoir, and the world’s biggest shooting ranges (4,000 square meters), the center’s press service told RBK. The main building will host lectures in IT and medical training and will include a pool and a gym. The center’s premises include a “tactical city,” wind tunnel, and parachute complex. A total of 40 facilities will be opening for mock battle with terrorists in an urban setting during both day and night. Bodyguards will also train there on a private basis. The republic’s authorities are not disclosing the cost of training at the center, because “the project is still not operating as a business,” Martynov said.*

*The idea of creating the center came to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov about four years ago, Martynov stated.*

*According to him, the core of the team of trainers are “guys” with whom Martynov “served in Alfa, the overall composition of the training team is 32 people. Twelve of them are senior instructors, veterans of the elite Alfa and Vypel units, recruited to perform special and highly complex operations (prevention of terrorist attacks, the release of hostages). The center’s 12 instructors include veterans of the Armed Forces General Staff Main Directorate (former GRU)....*

*When it comes to training of servicemen from Rosgvardiya, the Defense Ministry, or other security structures, in case the center and the security departments have to sign a contract, Murakhovskiy said....*

*...Thanks to the project, the West will have more to say about Chechnya, military expert Ivan Konovalov stated.*





## Training Russian Military Journalists

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past decade, Russian media coverage of military topics has increased significantly. Besides the media dedicated solely to covering the Russian military (i.e. Zvezda TV, *Krasnaya Zvezda* newspaper, etc...), regular Russian media coverage (especially TV) frequently include reports on the latest military training, new equipment and current operations. Russian media consumers are fed a steady diet of how the Kremlin is strengthening the military to better protect the country's interests.

As in other countries, the Russian reporters who cover these stories are often civilian journalists, with little or no military training. As the excerpt from the pro-Kremlin media source, *Izvestiya*, points out, this is based on a decision made under former Defense Minister Serdyukov, whereby military journalists would no longer be trained by the military, but instead, would attend the Voronezh State University (VGU) School of Journalism. This decision was part of a larger reform effort to contract out non-military functions and to streamline the military's education system. However, as the excerpt points out, the decision to train military journalists at this university has now been deemed a failure, and the military will resume training journalists within its own education system.

The article points out that besides the higher cost of training a military journalist at a civilian university, there were problems with actually enlisting the graduates of this program into the military. The article describes how, out of the first class of 10 students, "only three graduates of the VGU special group went to serve in the army." To support the decision to transfer the responsibility of training military journalists to the military education system, the article quotes "Military expert Vladislav Shurygin," who asserts that "the profession of 'military journalist' originates primarily with the word 'military'... training such a specialist under the auspices of a civilian institution is impossible. All the country's senior military experts came from the army." Shurygin goes on to emphasize that "special training is needed" to teach future military journalists how "to grasp and analyze the situation in depth."

Today's Kremlin leadership has made military preparedness a top priority, and to ensure that military topics are reported thoroughly and accurately, the military has reassumed training of its military journalists. It is unclear, however, whether these military-trained journalists will be trained to provide a critical assessment or perhaps question the wisdom of any military decision when the situation warrants. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*"The profession of 'military journalist' originates primarily with the word 'military'..."*

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin, Bogdan Stepovoy, "Военных журналистов вернули в строй (Military Journalists Back in the Ranks)," *Izvestiya Online*, 16 March 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/670862>

*The Defense Ministry and the Russian National Guard have resumed the training of military journalists, whose last graduation was in 2013. It is once again planned to instruct specialists under the auspices of the Military University's Journalism Department. Officer appointments in the military news media were cut during the military reform announced by ex-Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov. As a result, the majority of graduates, instead of assignments to the editorial boards of military newspapers and journals and the press services of districts and the fleets, were assigned to platoon-commander appointments.*

*Izvestiya was told in the Military University and the Main Personnel Directorate of the Defense Ministry that a decision of department chief Sergey Shoygu on the recruitment of 20 candidates for the Military Journalism Department has at this time already been made. Ten of them will be schooled at the request of the Federal National Guard Troops Service (FSVNG). The rest will be taken for Defense Ministry service. On completion of the course of instruction, they will all be accorded the rank of lieutenant and will be issued a diploma showing their military occupational specialty — military journalist....*

*"Military institution" is the key concept in this context. Following Anatoliy Serdyukov's reforms, the training of military journalists was given to civilian institutions of higher learning. In 2007 this possibility was acquired by Voronezh State University (VGU). A group of 10 students, who were instructed in the "military journalism" program, was formed under its auspices....*

*The instruction of a commercial student in the VGU School of Journalism costs approximately R80,000 a year. The Defense Ministry has paid the institution for a 10-man group approximately R1.4 million a year. The "military students" additionally received a scholarship from the defense department amounting to R5,000 a month here. But, as *Izvestiya* was able to learn, only three graduates of the VGU special group went to serve in the army in the time that the special school was in operation.*

*Military expert Vladislav Shurygin, a graduate of the Department of Journalism of the L'viv Higher Military-Political School (it was at this time part of the Military University), believes that the decision to begin the training of military journalists under the auspices of the military institution is very much right.... "The profession of 'military journalist' originates primarily with the word 'military'," Vladislav Shurygin observed. "That is, he is someone who knows the system and examines it. Training such a specialist under the auspices of a civilian institution is impossible. All the country's senior military experts came from the army. There are military reporters, of course. These are people who can report from a trouble spot, talk about some events in the Armed Forces. But in order to grasp and analyze the situation in depth, special training is needed..."*



## Military Parades and Economic Discontent

**OE Watch Commentary:** Strengthening Russia's armed forces remains a top Kremlin priority, and the Victory Day commemoration (9 May) provides a profound reminder of the importance of maintaining robust and combat-ready military forces. This year's tribute is certain to be a large and impressive display of Russian military might. As the first excerpt from the official Russian government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, points out, some 10,000 military personnel, along with more than 100 various weapon systems will participate in the parade on Red Square in Moscow. Recognizing the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War (WW II) is a nation-wide affair, with "the 9 May military parade being held in 28 Russian cities."

While there is no question that the Russian military has grown considerably stronger over the past decade, various problems remain. The second excerpt from the usually-pro Kremlin source, *Военно-промышленный курьер* (*Military-Industrial Courier*), describes the growing economic dissatisfaction among military retirees. The author contends that military pensions have failed to keep up with inflation, and that military retirees are being "discriminated against on the basis of having served in the military." According to the excerpt, some state pensioners are more equal than others (i.e. "federal state civil servants") and have enjoyed a higher level of pension-indexing over the past few years.

The author points out that such favoritism is unconstitutional and "undermines faith in state authorities, the higher command, and in the fairness of Russian laws among defenders of the Motherland, veterans and members of their families." Such treatment might convince "ordinary citizens...not to send their sons to the army." The article concludes on a somewhat ominous note, pointing out that the "real size of pensions in Russia will decline over the next three years." This decline will "cause an increase in social tension, which, whether the authorities want or not, will have to be taken into account. Especially on the eve of the presidential elections of 2018."

Falling fossil fuel revenues, Western economic sanctions, endemic corruption combined with poor demographics and other factors have placed a strain on the Russian economy and the country's pension system (to include military retirees). Regardless of these tensions, the Kremlin political leadership remains determined to strengthen, modernize, and parade the country's growing military might. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*"Negative emotions are intensifying against state officials, ordinary citizens are wondering whether to send their sons to the army..."*

**Source:** Dmitry Grigoriyev, "Появилось видео первой репетиции Парада Победы в Алабино (The video of the first rehearsal of the Victory Parade in Alabino)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 5 April 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/04/05/reg-cfo/poiavilos-video-pervoj-repeticii-parada-pobedy-v-alabino.html>

*The parade practice was attended by about 10,000 soldiers.... Military officials also noted there were approximately 100 pieces of equipment which took part in the rehearsal...[of] the 9 May military parade being held in 28 Russian cities.*

**Source:** Oleg Falichev, "Антиармейские санкции: Служба в Вооруженных Силах стала основанием для дискриминации (Anti-Army sanctions: Service in the Armed Forces became the basis for discrimination)," *Военно-промышленный курьер*, 27 March 2017. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/35878>

*...In 2012, pensions were raised for military reserve personnel and retirees. In accordance with the decision then made, they had to grow by two per cent annually to achieve the statutory size. But these obligations are not fulfilled by the state, and with unrestrained price increases, inflation even ate up the payments previously made. Legislators and the government systematically violated paragraph 2 of Art. 19 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. In fact, we are talking about pensioners being discriminated against on the basis of having served in the military.*

*...We can partly understand the dilemma of state officials: anti-Russian sanctions, the fall in production, problems with the collection of taxes. But then all pensioners should bear the burden. However, some people found themselves in a privileged position. The freezing of indexation and the introduction of a lowering factor did not affect the following categories of military pensioners, including members of their families: Federal state civil servants....*

*...By these actions, the legislators and the government of the Russian Federation diminished the role and special status of military service established by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, thereby permitting discrimination against military pensioners and persons of equal rank on the basis of their social status...*

*...Further delaying the decision to create an equal pension system undermines faith in state authorities, the higher command, and in the fairness of Russian laws among defenders of the Motherland, veterans and members of their families. "Negative emotions are intensifying against state officials, ordinary citizens are wondering whether to send their sons to the army...as it is obvious that being an "effective manager" is more profitable and prestigious than protecting the Motherland;...*

*...Only desperation prompts veterans to apply to higher authorities in search of truth and justice. As for the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, it certainly fights for the rights of servicemen, but now, due to the situation in Syria and the east of Ukraine, it is not up to it....*

*...this injustice will cause an increase in social tension, which, whether the authorities want or not, will have to be taken into account. Especially on the eve of the 2018 presidential elections.*





## Buying “Proof” of Military Service

**OE Watch Commentary:** One of the more popular Russian radio programs that deals with military topics is “Военное ревью” (*Military Review*), which is hosted by two retired colonels, Viktor Baranetz and Mikhail Timoshenko. The hour-long program airs daily on the *Комсомольская правда* (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*) radio station. In the usual format, Colonels Baranetz and Timoshenko briefly introduce a topic and then field and answer questions from the radio audience.

The introductory topic for the 11 April program was titled: “How much does it cost for a draft dodger to gain proof of military service?” During his opening remarks, Colonel Baranetz bemoaned the fact that with the start of the Spring 2017 conscript campaign, the internet is filled with sites where those who want to buy “proof” of their military service can do so for as little as 25,000 rubles (approximately \$450). Baranetz points out that not too long ago, such a document could cost upwards of \$20,000. He goes on to suggest that with such large sums, there was likely collusion in this draft-dodging scheme among officials involved with the conscript campaign (as many reportedly drove luxury cars).

Colonel Baranetz asks his partner, how such draft-dodging services can be openly advertised on the internet, “right under the nose of the authorities.” Colonel Timoshenko believes that the problem stems from lack of both effective legislation and enforcement mechanisms. He gives some examples of recently poorly designed legislation and points out that legislators often do not discuss all the intricacies of laws until they are already enacted. According to Timoshenko’s logic, because the laws are poorly drafted, they are equally poorly enforced.

Even with those who can buy their way out of mandatory military service, the Spring 2017 draft campaign (which runs from 1 April until mid-July) will likely meet its target of conscripting 142,000 one-year conscripts into the Russian military ranks. While these new draftees will do their share to strengthen Russia’s overall military capability, deeper questions surrounding corruption will continue to hamper the country’s development. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“How much does it cost these days to purchase a military ticket [proof of military service]?”*

**Source:** Viktor Baranetz and Mikhail Timoshenko, “За какую цену уклонист может купить в России военный билет (How much does it cost a draft-dodger to buy a military ticket),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda* radio, 11 April 2017. <http://www.kp.ru/radio/26664/3686141/>

*“The Spring draft campaign began on 1 April and when you now turn on the Internet you find its filled with sites on how to avoid military service...”*

*“How much does it cost these days to purchase a military ticket [proof of military service]?”*

*“The going rate is about 25,000 rubles, and that’s not even the cheapest....”*

*“I recall at one time it cost upwards of \$20,000 dollars...and some within the draft commission were driving Mercedes...”*

*“What laws do you think that these services [those that advertise on the Internet] are breaking?”*

*“At the very least, it is treason.”*

*“How is it that all this occurs right under the nose of the authorities?”*

*“It might stem from our legislators being so mixed up...they create poor laws which are next to impossible to enforce.... Consider the recent law which mandates that Glonass being installed on all new cars in Russia....do you think someone who just bought a Bentley will have it installed?... our legislators enact poorly written laws which are difficult to enforce....”*

*“The going rate is about 25,000 rubles, and that’s not even the cheapest....”*

## The Syrian Crisis from a Neighbor’s Perspective: View from Turkey

by Karen Kaya

What started out as internal turmoil in Syria in March 2011 turned into a regional crisis, which then turned into an international crisis. The crisis in Syria is now affecting the surrounding region, most critically Syria’s neighbors, who have all had to contend with instability at their borders. This article analyzes the Syrian crisis from Turkey’s perspective, discussing the direct security threats that it poses to Turkey. The article focuses on the following four themes: Border security and the spill-over effects of internal clashes; Turkey’s concerns regarding the formation of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria; its concerns regarding the PKK expanding its base and influence; and the risk of Turkey having a jihadi presence on its border along with becoming a transit point for Islamic militants going to join the fighting in Syria.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Syrian-Crisis-View-from-Turkey.pdf>







## Arming the Icebreakers

**OE Watch Commentary:** As Russia moves to increase Arctic traffic through Russian waters, it makes sense to provide some clout to the crew. As the accompanying article from *Izvestia* discusses, military icebreakers will be equipped with the latest AK-176MA artillery “stealth” installations. The AK-176MA is the Navy’s first automatic gun mount made using “stealth” low radar signature technology. It is a rapid firing 152mm automatic gun that fires 16 kilometers. It will be interesting to see how well this auto cannon performs in extreme cold. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**Source:** Dimitri Litovkin, “Military Icebreakers Will Get Invisible Guns; New Artillery Systems Against Aerial, Sea, and Land Targets Are Invisible to Enemy Radar,” *Izvestia*, 17 March 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/670571>

*“The latest AK-176MA artillery “stealth” installations will equip “military icebreakers” —Arctic zone patrol ships of project 23550. The lead ship of this series is due to be delivered to the Navy in 2019. The sailors will get a standardized combat unit combining the capabilities of a tugboat, patrol ship, and icebreaker. The ship will be able both to operate in the tropics and to break ice up to 1.5 meters thick. But, most important, it will be able to carry out artillery strikes against marine, coastal, and even aerial targets.”*

*The AK-176MA is the Navy’s first automatic gun mount made using “stealth” low radar signature technology. Unlike previous generations of similar systems*

*which had round or oval contoured turrets, the new gun is enclosed with straight panels. They make the gun mount less visible to enemy radar.*

*The gun will be incorporated in future icebreakers and will be placed in the forecastle of the ship. The AK-176MA artillery mount is the latest product from the Saint Petersburg Arsenal engineering plant. The gun is aimed by a digital control system. The artillery magazine underneath the gun mount holds 76 152-millimeter shells. The gun’s automation and ammunition feed make it possible to fire at a rate of 125 rounds per minute. Thanks to the barrel cooling system, a long series of up to 75 rounds can be fired. When firing at surface or shore targets the effective firing range is 16 kilometers.*

*According to Nadezhda Malysheva, development director of PortNyuS Information and Analysis Agency, the patrol ship has no counterparts in terms of overall technical performance. It is designed for protection and monitoring of the Arctic water resources, escorting and towing apprehended vessels to port, accompanying and assisting support vessels, participating in rescue operations, transporting special cargoes in containers on the upper deck, and also firefighting for floating and onshore facilities.*

*“Modern icebreakers today face much greater demands than similar vessels previously” Nadezhda Malysheva noted. “Icebreakers have to not only break the ice and guide ships, but also perform auxiliary functions: rescue and engineering work and freight supply. Standard multirole patrol ships which combine several support functions and are of ice class are becoming ever more in demand by the Navy.”*

*The construction of standard multirole ice-class vessels is the result of active development of the military infrastructure in the Arctic. The Ministry of Defense was given this task by Supreme Commander in Chief Vladimir Putin.*

*“The latest AK-176MA artillery “stealth” installations will equip “military icebreakers” — Arctic zone patrol ships of project 23550. The lead ship of this series is due to be delivered to the Navy in 2019. The sailors will get a standardized combat unit combining the capabilities of a tugboat, patrol ship, and icebreaker. The ship will be able both to operate in the tropics and to break ice up to 1.5 meters thick. But, most important, it will be able to carry out artillery strikes against marine, coastal, and even aerial targets.”*





## Winter Training in the Arctic

**OE Watch Commentary:** Arctic observers were wondering what the Russian response would be to the Norwegian Exercise “Viking 2017.” The Norwegian Arctic exercise included small contingents of US and British forces. Apparently Russia chose an understated response compared to years past. As the accompanying article from *The Independent Barents Observer* discusses, Russia conducted some low-level ground force activities and a game of submarine tag in the Barents Sea. The Arctic Council conducted its meeting in Archangelsk, Russia after the exercises and it was probably a good thing not having this important meeting with any major Arctic military activities on-going. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“While Norwegian, British and American soldiers exercised in Finnmark, Russia has demonstrated underwater stealth technology in a submarine-to-submarine kill exercise.”*

**Source:** Thomas Nielsen, “Nuclear subs played cat-and-mouse game in Barents Sea,” *The Independent Barents Observer*, 11 March 2017. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/03/nuclear-subs-played-cat-and-mouse-game-barents-sea>

*Around 8,000 soldiers trained for winter combat in Norway’s western Finnmark, Norway’s northernmost county, mainly operating along the coast to the Norwegian Sea in the west and the Barents Sea to the north.*

*Across the border to the east, on Russia’s Kola Peninsula, Russian soldiers conducted field firing in the Pechenga region a few dozen kilometers from the border with Norway. According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, the training is a part of an army competition. Russia’s recently established Arctic Brigade’s soldiers are also preparing for exercises in deep snow and low temperatures.*

*More advanced, out in the Barents Sea, two nuclear powered submarines have been playing one of the most serious war games submarines can be involved in; hunt-and-kill each other.*

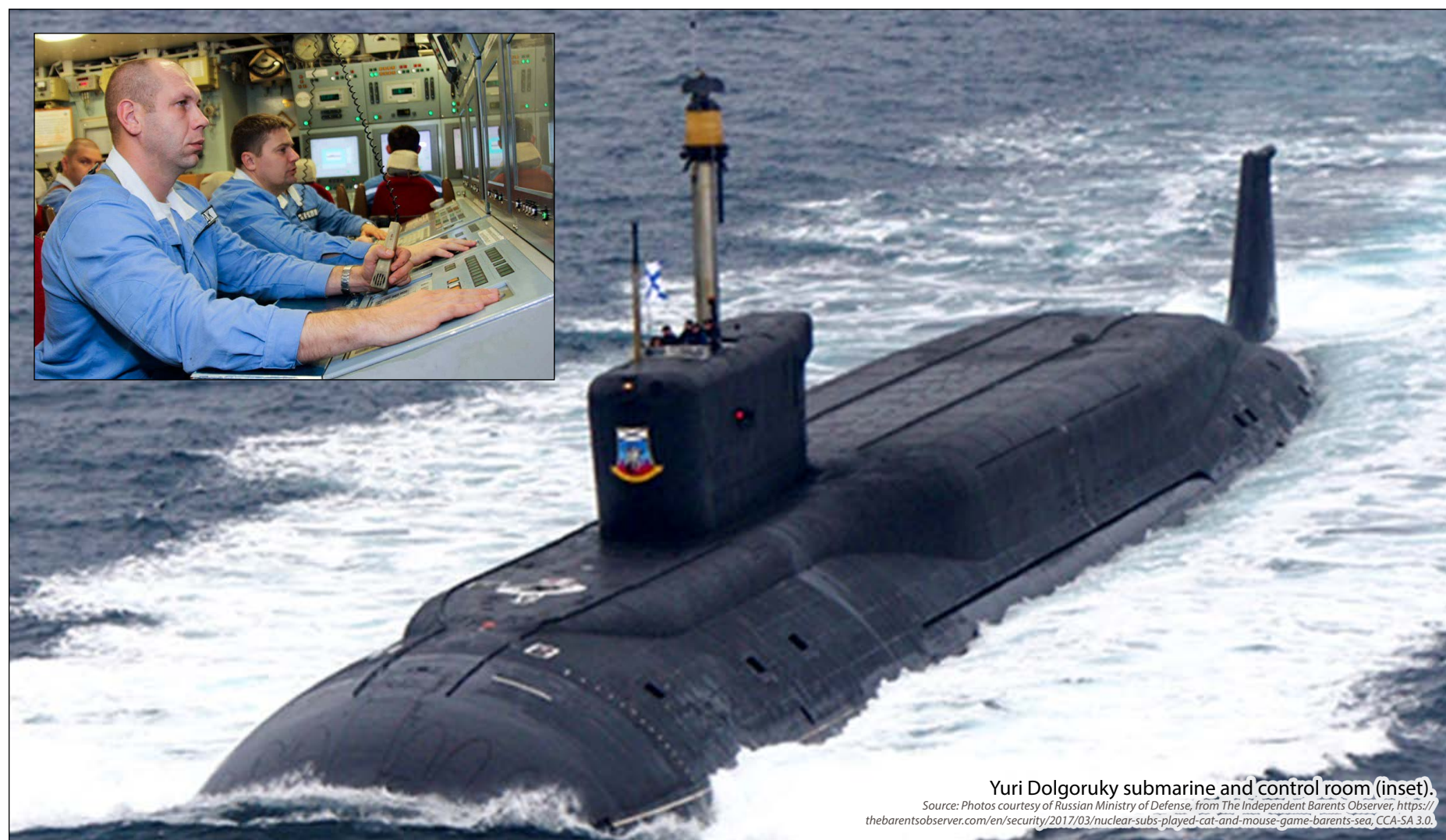
*At least one of the two submarines, the ballistic missile carrier “Yury Dolgoruky” is armed with nuclear weapons. Each of the 16 Bulava missiles on board can carry six nuclear warheads. The other vessel, “Obninsk” is a 27 years old Viktor-class multi-purpose submarine that might, or might-not carry tactical nuclear weapons.*

*Russia’s Defense Ministry stated that the most difficult part of the two submarine’s maneuvers in the Barents Sea was torpedo firing at underwater targets using dummy warheads.*

*The “Yury Dolgoruky” is the only Borei-class vessel in operation with the Northern fleet. Russia’s TASS news agency states that the developers have managed to achieve maximum stealth capability by using a hydraulic propeller placed in a special ring nozzle that operates like a water pump receiving a stream flow.*

*“Borei-class submarines can detect targets under the water while out of reach of sonar used by any of the enemy’s warships,” TASS noted.*

*The Defense Ministry did not say where in the Barents Sea the cat-and-mouse game took place.*



Yuri Dolgoruky submarine and control room (inset).

Source: Photos courtesy of Russian Ministry of Defense, from *The Independent Barents Observer*, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/03/nuclear-subs-played-cat-and-mouse-game-barents-sea>, CCA-SA 3.0.





## ETA Shows in France

**OE Watch Commentary:** OE Watch last mentioned ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* translated as Basque Homeland and Freedom) three years ago when several members had been arrested (“Is ETA Still Around?” *OE Watch* February 2014). Now it looks even closer to the end of the road for what is left of the organization. ETA activists and some self-styled ‘artisans of peace’ set up a surrender of weapons ceremony in the city of Bayonne, in Southwestern France. (It was not a direct turn-in; they gave directions to the authorities leading to weapons caches) Many Spanish observers, including in the government, weren’t quite buying it, characterizing the event as political theatre. As the references exemplify, many Spaniards, especially victims of ETA violence, are opposed to amnesty for members of the group, which had been placed on the US Department of State list of foreign terrorist organizations in 1997. They see the supposed disarmament as incomplete, insincere, and as just part of a media stunt intended to help gain concessions from the present or future Spanish government for ETA prisoners as they complete jail time. In any case, it seems ETA is in its nadir if not twilight. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“There was no impunity for the ETA when it stopped killing and there is not going to be any now.”*



ETA NO.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ETA\\_NO.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ETA_NO.jpg)  
autor Midir — open use



Map of Gascony.  
Source: By Larrousinet (Wikipedia fr), <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AMapOfGascony.png>, GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)

**Source:** Libertad Digital, “Las víctimas, ante la ‘fiesta’ de ETA: ‘La ley se tiene que aplicar a todos’ (The Victims, about the ETA’s ‘fiesta’: ‘The law has to apply to everyone),” *Libertad Digital* and *esRadio*, Madrid, 8 April 2017. [http://www.libertaddigital.com/espana/2017-04-08/las-victimas-ante-la-fiesta-de-eta-la-ley-se-tiene-que-aplicar-a-todos-1276596622/?utm\\_source=2&utm\\_medium=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=newsletter](http://www.libertaddigital.com/espana/2017-04-08/las-victimas-ante-la-fiesta-de-eta-la-ley-se-tiene-que-aplicar-a-todos-1276596622/?utm_source=2&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=newsletter).

*“In declarations to esRadio, Consuelo Ordóñez, president of COVITE (victims’ organization), expressed herself regarding the terrorist band’s farce in the south of France, with the staging of the disarmament. As she explains it, they live ‘in considerable pain’ that this is happening ‘because they are making a fiesta out of a supposed disarmament with the sole objective of whitewashing the crimes.’”*

**Source:** Agencias, “El Gobierno: ‘El desarme de ETA es una operación mediática para disimular su derrota’ (The Administration: ‘The ETA’s disarmament is a media operation intended to fake its defeat’),” *ABC España*, 8 April 2017. [http://www.abc.es/espana/abci-reacciones-desarme-eta-201704081328\\_noticia.html](http://www.abc.es/espana/abci-reacciones-desarme-eta-201704081328_noticia.html).

*“‘There was no impunity for the ETA when it stopped killing and there is not going to be any now.’ This is the clear message that the minister of the Interior, Juan Ignacio Zoido, has wanted to send this morning, and he once again classified the ‘day of disarmament as a ‘dog and pony show’.”*





## Stockholm Terror Attack Shows New and Old Trends

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 7 April, a 39-year old man from Uzbekistan hijacked a brewery truck and rammed it into people in a business district in the center of Stockholm, Sweden, killing four. The excerpted article in Sweden's *Aftonbladet* from the same day includes reactions from Swedish security officials, who say that the perpetrator of the truck attack was already a "person of interest" to the police.

He had, for example, previously expressed positive views about the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and "liked" images of the victims of the Boston marathon on Facebook. He had been reported to the Security Service by someone who considered him to be threatening. As the first accompanying passage from Swedish *Expressen* reports, it has since been revealed that the attacker was, in fact, in contact with ISIS on the social media application WhatsApp directly before the attack. His application for asylum had been rejected and he was ordered to be deported. This may have played a role in triggering him to launch an attack.

The excerpted article shows the difficulty of tracking down potential terrorists who do not overtly exhibit signs that they will carry out an attack imminently, but who otherwise support terrorist organizations rhetorically. Various Swedish leaders nonetheless expressed confidence that Sweden would recover from this incident and remain safe. Indeed, an attack on a soft target like this one involving what appears to be a lone attacker is difficult to prevent, but Sweden deems its response to have been successful. The suspect was arrested shortly after the attack, explosives in the truck were immediately defused safely, and raids were carried out on the home of the attacker, where other individuals were detained (it is unclear if they knew of the attack in advance or assisted in putting together the explosive).

This attack also highlights some new trends in terrorism in Europe. The attacker, for example, at 39-years old is older than the typical terrorist, especially those who have been involved in ISIS-directed or related attacks. The attacker's profile resembles the 52-year old attacker in central London one month earlier, who rammed a car into civilians and stabbed to death a police officer there. This attack in Stockholm also seems to have involved elements of the attack by a Tunisian on Berlin's Christmas market in 2016 in which the attacker also hijacked a truck and rammed it into civilians, killing more than 10 people. Ramming itself was first used in an attack in Nice, France on its Bastille Day in July 2016, so there appears to be repetition among different attacks throughout Europe. In terms of nationality, this attack is also notable because the attacker was Central Asian. The attack in Stockholm comes off the heels of a suicide bombing one week earlier by a young Kyrgyz male in the Saint Petersburg metro in Russia. (See: "The Aftermath of the St. Petersburg Metro Bombing," in this issue.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

**Source:** "Påstådd Akilov-chatt ifrågasätts (Alleged Akilov chat questioned)," *Expressen.se*, 10 April 2017. <http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/akilovs-is-chatt-fore-och-efter-terrordadet/>

*Terror Suspect Rakhmat Akilov had received bomb instructions from an IS-supporters - and had the parts with them in the truck, according to a chat published by several Russian media.*

**Source:** "Attack in central Stockholm: 4 dead - explosives found in lorry," *Aftonbladet*, 7 April 2017. <http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/KJOR5/attack-in-central-stockholm-4-dead-explosives-found-in-lorry>

*At 2:53 pm, Friday afternoon, police were alerted to Drottninggatan, a main shopping street in downtown Stockholm. An hour later Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven stated that Sweden has become the scene for an apparent terrorist attack. A lorry was, in what seems to be a deliberate attack, driven several blocks along the pedestrian street hitting and running over several people. The lorry then drove straight into the storefront of the Åhléns department store, a main spot for Friday shoppers in the Swedish capital. Shortly thereafter the lorry caught fire. At least four people have been killed in the attack and there is "a large number of wounded". The Swedish government offices, situated a block from Drottninggatan, approximately 700 meters from where the attack took place, were evacuated and all ministers put to safety. Police urged people to stay away from downtown Stockholm and to avoid large crowds.*

*One man was arrested around 8.30 pm in the town of Märsta outside Stockholm. A source tells Aftonbladet that the man claims to be responsible for the attack, and that he resembles the person on the pictures, previously acknowledged as a "person of interest". Aftonbladet's sources have identified the arrested man as a 39-year old man of Uzbek citizenship. In his social media accounts the man has expressed positive views of the terror organisation IS, and also "liked" a picture on Facebook of bloody victims taken seconds after the explosion at the Boston Marathon in April 2013.*

## Transition in the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan - From Conscripts to Contract Soldiers by Matt Stein

**Kazakhstan's Armed Forces have been working to modernize, reform and expand their capabilities since the state became independent in 1991. Much of the attention on this development has been on security cooperation with Russia, the United States and other partners, but there have also been internally driven efforts that could have just as significant an impact. One of these efforts over the past several years has been the increase in the number of professional contract soldiers in the Armed Forces, which is part of a plan to have contract soldiers make up 99% of the Armed Forces by the end 2016. While the result has yet to be announced, an examination of Kazakhstan's effort to have its Armed Forces made up of contract soldiers will show how this effort has been progressing and the impact this could have on the capabilities of the country's Armed Forces and on the Central Asian region.**

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Stein - Transition in the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan - From Conscripts to Contract Soldiers.pdf>

# New Generation Media and Militias: A Case Study in Russia's November 2015 Search and Rescue Operation

On the morning of 24 November 2015, two Russian Sukhoi Su-24M2 “Fencer” bombers took off from the Hmeimim (Khmeimim) Airbase near the city of Jablah, in the Syrian province of Latakia. The bombers were supporting a Syrian government offensive in the province's north, on the border with Turkey. After 20 minutes patrolling the skies in nearby Idlib Province they turned west to bomb rebel positions in the forested hills of the Turkmen Mountain, near the border.<sup>1</sup> At 0924 local time, shortly after the Sukhois dropped the first of two payloads, a Turkish fighter jet shot one of them down. Turkey claimed that the Russian bombers had crossed into Turkish airspace and, despite repeated warnings, failed to change course.<sup>2</sup> Russia disputed both claims, saying that its aircraft were ambushed in Syrian territory and received no prior warning.<sup>3</sup>

The Fencer's two crewmen, a pilot and a navigator/weapons systems operator, both ejected safely. Rebel video shows them parachuting down at some distance from one another. The first hint that the ensuing combat search and rescue (CSAR) operation might be unconventional came when Lt Col Oleg Peshkov, the pilot, was shot and killed before reaching ground. He was killed by a group of Turkmen nationalists linked to the Free Syrian Army (FSA) who called themselves the “10th Brigade” of the FSA's “2d Coastal Division.”<sup>4</sup> They quickly uploaded short videos of themselves capturing the dead pilot. A few days later Peshkov's remains were handed back to the Russian military, via the Turkish government.

Captain Konstantin Murkakhtin, the navigator, drifted into a neutral zone separating Syrian rebels and loyalists, in an area known as Qizil Dag in Turkish and Jabal al-Ahmar (Red Mountain) in Arabic, near the rebel-held mountain village of Atira and overlooking both Syrian and Turkish territory. The nearest Syrian government positions - the town of Kassab, Observation Point 45 and the Firnliq Forest - were all several kilometers away to the north and west. According to Russian military reports, Murkakhtin activated his radio beacon and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) were immediately sent to pinpoint his location. A spokesman for the Turkmen militia that shot and killed the Su-24's pilot claimed on *al-Jazeera News* to have Murkakhtin in custody.

Russian leadership dispatched a CSAR team from Hmeimim approximately 15 minutes after the crash report. The Su-24's crash site lay some 50 kilometers north of Russia's Syrian command center. It could be reached quickly and with limited flight over rebel territory. According to the Russian military, two Mi-8 (Mi-8AMTSh Hip) transport helicopters were dispatched, each carrying around eight Russian marines from the naval infantry's 810th Brigade based in Hmeimim, in addition to two crewmen. The Mi-8s were escorted by Mi-24 helicopter gunships (“Crocodiles”).<sup>5</sup>

The route chosen led the CSAR team through a triangle bounded by the rebel-held towns of Salma, Rabi'a and Ghamam, where a Syrian loyalist offensive was underway. Russian command may have been unaware of the pilot's precise location when the CSAR team took flight, and this was likely the best path available toward the crash site on such short notice. At the triangle's entrance near the junction of the “old” and “new” Latakia-Idlib Highways (Highway 4 and Highway M4 respectively), the rescue team came under small- and medium-arms rebel anti-aircraft fire.<sup>6</sup> Rebels forced one of the Mi-8s to turn back; Russian marine Aleksandr Pozynich was killed onboard. A second Mi-8 was forced to land in a clearing between rebel- and government-held positions. According to a regime supporter's Face-

book page, there were two crewmen and seven Russian marines in the downed helicopter.<sup>7</sup> The team took cover in a nearby building. Russian forces were now faced with a tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel (TRAP) mission to extricate the Mi-8 and its team, on top of the mission to find and rescue Murkakhtin.

A crew from the *Abkhazian Network News Agency* (ANNA News) happened to be embedded with “Naval Commandos” from a loyalist militia known as the “Desert Hawks” or “Desert Falcons” (Suqur al-Sahara), near the clearing where the Mi-8 landed. ANNA is a privately owned Russian-speaking YouTube channel known for documenting combat from the Syrian government perspective. The loyalist militia fighters were conducting surveillance in the area as part of the offensive to reclaim the Salma-Rabi'a-Ghamam triangle.

The Desert Hawks were created in 2013 following the Syrian government's privatization of petroleum infrastructure protection. They were previously commanded by an elite soldier from the Syrian military's Republican Guard (who was killed in November 2014) and financed by brothers Mohammed and Ayman Jaber, regime tycoons and the dominant players in Syria's steel industry. The Naval Commandos were a Desert Hawks spinoff operating in territory controlled by the Jabers in Latakia Province.

The Jabers' troops had witnessed the Russian Su-24 go down in the distance earlier that morning. As a result they were in direct communication with their leader and likely on alert. When the Mi-8 went down in front of the Naval Commandos team, Ayman Jaber claims to have dispatched, on his own initiative, two teams totaling around 40 men to bring the Russian crew to safety. Receiving cover from machine guns, ZU23 anti-aircraft guns, and Russian helicopter gunships, the rescue team safely extricated the stranded Russians. Around ten minutes later rebels from the FSA's “1st Coastal Division” destroyed the damaged aircraft with an anti-tank guided missile (ATGM).<sup>8</sup>

Murkakhtin was rescued many miles to the north the following day, at 0240 local time. According to the Russian Defense Ministry, the operation to rescue him lasted 12 hours.<sup>9</sup> Details are scant. To begin with, it is unclear whether or not rebels had captured Murkakhtin; the “rescue operation,” according to some accounts, was a negotiation for his release after Syrian forces surrounded his captors. The favored account in loyalist media is that Syrian Air Force Intelligence Special Forces, with Russian support, penetrated several kilometers into rebel territory to rescue the pilot after nightfall.<sup>10</sup> Syrian forces played the leading role and were subsequently honored by the Russian military for their role in the CSAR and TRAP operations.

Official accounts of rescue missions are often sanitized and polished to serve as morale boosters, and this was no exception. Sympathetic media portrayed the operation to rescue Murkakhtin as a heroic success, embellishing the story with elements from the Mi-8 rescue. *Russia Today*, for instance, opened an article conflating the two operations, titled “No Man Left Behind: Dramatic Details Emerge of Downed Su-24 Pilot Rescue,” as follows: “Gripping new details of the rescue of the downed Russian Su-24 pilot have been revealed. The details are straight out of the movie, *Black Hawk Down*, and reveal how Russian Marines saved the pilot in a breath-taking frontline op involving a fierce shootout with militants.”<sup>11</sup>

(continued)



## Continued: New Generation Media and Militias: A Case Study in Russia's November 2015 Search and Rescue Operation

When news broke that the Su-24M2 had been shot down, all eyes were focused on Russia's strategic response to Turkish actions. Russia's ability to patch together successful CSAR (Murkakh-tin) and TRAP (Mi-8 team) missions, despite the geopolitical distractions and given Russia's light footprint in Syria, can be attributed to quick decision-making and strong relationships on the ground.

It helped that conditions were favorable for the initial CSAR mission to succeed. The Turkish Air Force, which had downed Murkakh-tin's plane, was not expected to target the rescue force. A corridor of friendly territory connected the Russian base and the periphery of the crash site. The crash site was close to the Russian base at Hmeimim. The rebels in the area were more likely to negotiate than a more hard-line group such as the Islamic State. Competent Syrian forces were stationed nearby. Under more challenging circumstances, Russia's hasty CSAR mission may have led to greater fatalities and a loss of credibility.

Russia's response to the Sukhoi shoot-down, after the rescue missions, included strategic measures targeting Turkey and intensifying military action in Syria.<sup>12</sup> In terms of rescue operations, Russia publicly requested assistance from the US for CSAR operations in Syria, a move motivated as much by political as by military considerations.<sup>13</sup> Russian military leadership claimed to have started an intensive CSAR training program around the time of its Syrian intervention, though it is unclear whether this program's graduates were deployed to Syria.<sup>14</sup> In January 2016 Russia deployed its latest-model Ka-52 helicopter gunships to Syria to help "conduct combat search-and-rescue operations [CSAR]" according to Russia's TASS news agency.<sup>15</sup> Following their role in the TRAP mission, the Desert Hawks became one of Russia's favored Syrian partners. The last of these measures may well be the most consequential.

During the TRAP mission, Russian forces and the Desert Hawks coordinated effectively in real-time and without prior planning. The direct involvement of Desert Hawks leader Ayman Jaber meant that quick and consequential decisions could be made without seeking approval from Syrian Army command, given Jaber's direct access to regime leadership. Jaber became personally involved in the operation; video uploaded to YouTube showed him welcoming the rescued Russian forces to his compound, from where they were returned safely to Hmeimim.

The ANNA crew played an effective informational role by establishing the baseline narrative of what took place, with video evidence

to back up their claims. They also played a direct operational role as liaison between the Russian and Arabic-speaking troops during the TRAP mission. Jaber explained how his forces "were given a password" to reassure the Russians they were friendly forces; the "password" turned out to simply be the Russian word for "friend" (droog), used at the suggestion of the Russian-speaking ANNA News crew.<sup>16</sup>

ANNA belongs to a new generation of war reporting spawned by social media and the Syrian War. It was founded when the Syrian uprising first escalated (July 2011) and has expanded to also cover events in Ukraine. Its cameramen and reporters have embedded with Syrian loyalist units in a variety of settings, producing informative reports filmed in high-definition. Its crews include retired Russian military volunteers.<sup>17</sup> ANNA reporters have uploaded videos of themselves applying bandages to an injured Syrian soldier, riding in tanks on the outskirts of Damascus, traversing the desert to document anti-ISIS offensives, exploring vacated rebel tunnels, and more.

Despite the absence of a direct or intentional link with the Kremlin, ANNA is a useful asset to Russian military efforts in Syria. According to Marat Musin, its founder, a Russia-based economist from Abkhazia, ANNA aims to "counter the advanced information technologies that are used by al-Qaida to make insurgents in the Middle East look like freedom fighters."<sup>18</sup> In the November 2015 TRAP and elsewhere, ANNA's crews have transcended this informational role, at times acting like informal advisers to Syrian troops.

ANNA is a private media entity that has thrived in Syria's irregular, decentralized battlefield. It is one of many social media ventures that wield as much, if not more, influence on the Syrian conflict than do traditional journalists.<sup>19</sup> In the TRAP operation, ANNA's crew helped bridge the linguistic and cultural gap between Russians and Syrians. Their actions may have been critical to the time-sensitive mission's success.

A key takeaway from the November 2015 rescue operation is that on the Syrian battlefield, non-traditional media and irregular forces usually operate at an advantage over their conventional counterparts. In irregular conflict settings more generally, ad hoc decentralized decision-making often trumps central planning. Conventional forces and traditional media outlets face structural disadvantages when operating in battlefields like the Syrian one, in part because information moves faster and is harder to control. Social media have empowered new actors and accelerated the pace and scope of information emanating from the battlefield; forces wishing to control the narrative must adapt accordingly. □

1. The forested Turkmen Mountain are located in northern Latakia Province, between the port cities of Latakia (Syria) and Antakya (Turkey), in an area known in Turkish as Bayırbucak. The area gets its name from the Syrian Turkmen who live there (along with other minority groups). Turkey's Hatay Province along the border is in Syria called the "lost province" of Iskenderun and depicted as part of Syrian territory in maps there. There are an estimated 27 Turkmen villages with 80,000 residents on the Syrian side of the border.

2. Luke Harding. "Shooting Down of Russian Jet – How the Day Unfolded." *The Guardian*, 24 November 2015. Accessed 19 July 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/shooting-down-of-russian-jet-how-the-day-unfolded>

3. "Speech of the Chief of the Main Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Sergei Rudskoy on Provocative Actions of the Turkish Air Force." *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Air Force Group in Syria*, 24 November 2015. Accessed 19 July 2016, [http://eng.syria.mil.ru/en/index/syria/media\\_briefings/in\\_detail.htm?id=12066685@morfPressConferenceNew](http://eng.syria.mil.ru/en/index/syria/media_briefings/in_detail.htm?id=12066685@morfPressConferenceNew) and [http://eng.syria.mil.ru/en/index/syria/news/more.htm?id=12066900@egNews&\\_print=true](http://eng.syria.mil.ru/en/index/syria/news/more.htm?id=12066900@egNews&_print=true)

4. Turkish citizen Alparslan Celik publicly took credit for the shooting. He recanted and was acquitted after being investigated for the act in Turkey. Celik belongs to the right-wing Turkish irredentist "Grey Wolves" and had been fighting against the Syrian government in the Turkmen Mountain along with other members of the group.

5. At least two Mi-8s and one Mi-24 were involved. Some media accounts claim there were three Mi-8s, others more than one Mi-24. The total number of helicopters involved in the CSAR did not appear to exceed five.

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# Continued: New Generation Media and Militias: A Case Study in Russia's November 2015 Search and Rescue Operation

6. An article on *sofrep.com* claims that rebels most likely used 12.7, 14.5 and 23mm cannons (the last of these incorrectly referred to as 22mm in the article). It is unclear whether rebels also had 57mm rounds. "Inside Russia's Mission to Rescue its Pilots." *Sofrep News*, 26 November 2015. Accessed 19 July 2016, <https://sofrep.com/44881/inside-russias-mission-to-rescue-its-pilots/>
7. "Russian Fighter Killed During the Operation... Loyalist Sources Publish Details on Assad Militia Rescue of Russian Force Encircled While Trying to Rescue Pilots," *Aks al-Ser*, 25 November 2015 (in Arabic). Accessed 19 July 2016, <http://www.aksalser.com/news/2015/11/25/%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7/>
8. Footage available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hb38RucXeQQ> (Accessed 19 July 2016).
9. "Downed Su-24 Pilot Found 'Safe and Sound', Taken to Hmeymim Base." *Sputnik News*, 25 November 2015. Accessed 19 July 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/military/20151125/1030713848/downed-jet-pilot-safe-airbase-hmeymim.html>  
According to the Russian Defense Ministry, he was rescued after 12 hours. He was likely brought back safely to Kassab and from there taken to the Hmeimeim Airbase at around 0200 local time, 16 hours after the crash.
10. "Syrian Paper Recounts Rescue of Downed Russian Pilot." *AFP*, 26 November 2015. Accessed 19 July 2016, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/syrian-paper-recounts-rescue-downed-russian-pilot-115703479.html?ref=gs>
11. "No Man Left Behind: Dramatic Details Emerge of Downed Su-24 Pilot Rescue." *RT*, 27 November 2015. Accessed 19 July 2016, <https://www.rt.com/news/323527-details-su24-pilot-rescue/>
12. In addition to political measures targeting Turkey, Russia expanded and intensified its bombing campaign immediately following the incident. The Russian military also deployed advanced weaponry to Syria, including the S-400 anti-air defense missile system. Additional fighter jets were brought in to escort the ground-attack aircraft. See Dave Majudar. "Next Up for Syria: Even More Lethal Russian Military Hardware," *National Interest*, 30 November 2015. <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/next-syria-even-more-lethal-russian-military-hardware-14467>
13. Brian Everstine. "Russia Wanted US CSAR." *Air Force Magazine Daily Report*, 26 February 2016. Accessed 19 July 2016, <http://www.airforcemag.com/DRArchive/Pages/2016/February%202016/February%2026%202016/Russia-Wanted-US-CSAR.aspx>
14. Maksymilian Dura. "Air Strikes in Syria and Russian Propaganda." *Defence24*, 2 October 2015. Accessed 19 July 2016, <http://www.defence24.com/266090,air-strikes-in-syria-and-russian-propaganda#>
15. Nikolai Novichkov. "Russia to Deploy Ka-52 Helicopters to Syria." *HIS Jane's Defense Weekly*, 18 January 2016. Accessed 19 July 2016, <http://www.janes.com/article/57253/russia-to-deploy-ka-52-helicopters-to-syria>
16. Footage available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tay0-z0lBBs> (Accessed 19 July 2016).
17. Ivan Nechepurenko. "'Crazy Abkhaz' Journalists Cover Syria Frontline." *The Moscow Times*, 13 March 2013. Accessed 19 July 2016, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/crazy-abkhaz-journalists-cover-syria-frontline/476903.html>
18. *Ibid.*
19. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) is perhaps the best example of this phenomenon. SOHR has become the authoritative voice on events in Syria for those opposing the Assad government. It is run by a Syrian expat from his home in Coventry, England.

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